No. 682. For Week Ending January 25th, 1902. [One Penny.

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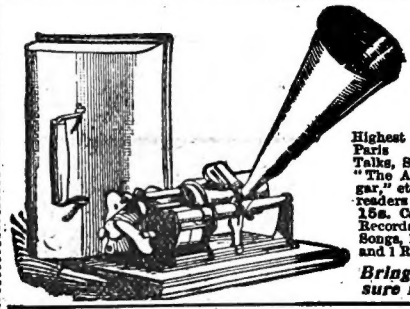

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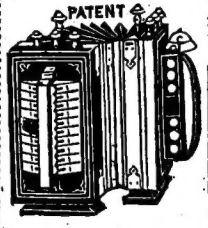

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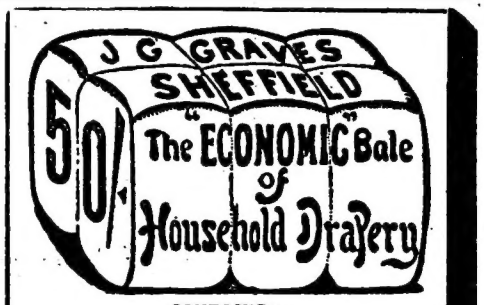

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SHORT STORIES.

No. 682.] For the Week Ending January 25th, 1902. [ONE PENNY.

The Lady of the Island.

CHAPTER I.

A Singular Predicament.

"EXCUSE me, sir, but what might your name be? You'll pardon my asking, but you see it's this way—you're the only passenger by the eight-forty left on the platform, and mine's the only private conveyance left in the lane. So, as I was to meet a gentleman from London, I thought perhaps——"

The inquirer hesitated. He was a sturdy, cheerful fellow, in a blue livery and black top boots, with buff bands to them. In his deferential tones there was the suspicion of an Irish accent; its insinuating music disarmed the person whom he had addressed, and whose glance had rested almost irritably upon him. Both had been lingering near the exit of the small country station for a long five minutes.

"I am Robert Causton," was the answer, "and I am bound for Swart Island, to Mrs. Valentine Tennant's place there. I understood that a dog-cart was to meet the express."

"Dear, dear, sir," responded the other, "it's a turble mix, to be sure, for the dog-cart cast a tyre, and I brought the phæton instead. And it was an elderly gentleman I had to fetch, and you're what—saving your presence, sir—many of us'd give a deal to be once more; that's about seven-and-twenty, sir."

"I come in my father's place," said Causton, briefly. "I have just this kit-bag," he added, "and I telegraphed that I would be with Mrs. Tennant at nine o'clock."

"Quite so, sir," assented the Irishman, taking the article in question, "and you'll be meaning it's nigh that now. But you couldn't have done it at the best, for the drive to the Island'll cost fifteen minutes, and the train was late. However, sir, I'll do my utmost with the cattle, and they're not bad bits of blood, either."

He piloted the visitor out of the white-painted wicket that opened from the platform, and slung his burden into the rumble of a tall phæton that was harnessed to a pair of gaunt but powerful bays, held by a lounger. A moment afterwards the vehicle was spinning down the soft macadam road, between thick and dewy hedges, in the direction of the sea, which lay athwart its extremity like a pale-grey ribbon. The evening had descended, but the autumn air was clear and mild.

"How is Mrs. Tennant?" queried Robert Causton, rousing from a thoughtful contemplation of the quiet prospect.

"Worse, sir," he was told—and the driver whipped up his horses, lending an unconscious emphasis to his report—"she's failing fast. Not but what they're keeping it from Miss Delia, poor child."

The Irishman steadied the bays as they crossed a strip of wild fore-shore, gained the sandy flats of the beach, and turned to the obscure and purple horizon.

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When they had settled into their stride again, he glanced at the clean-shaven, impassive face beside him. It expressed no surprise.

"The Island lays off round the head yonder," he vouchsafed; "we can manage a couple of journeys betwixt tides, if we start with the water to the beasts' fetlocks. I've got back with it to their knees, sir."

He chirrupped encouragingly, and the pair started into a quick trot, notwithstanding the heavy nature of the substance upon which they had been guided, and the twinkling lights of the coast began rapidly to diminish. Soon the phæton escaped from the eclipsing bulk of the great promontory on the left, and a yellow point appeared in front, low, steady, yet far-off."

"That's the Island, sir," explained his cicerone; "but it's tricky going hereabout, we daren't run a straight course on account of the quicksands."

Causton shaded his brows and peered into the dusk. Lawyer as he was, the singularity of his surroundings stirred in him an unusual instinct of romance—the distant sigh of the ocean, the glimmer of an occasional star in the sky flooded with the silver radiance of the risen moon, the fresh salt breath that blew upon his stalwart figure—set him wondering if he were the victim of some fantastic dream, or whether his prosaic office in Lincoln's Inn Fields—yes, even the Fields themselves and the noisy, fretful metropolis about them—were not rather the dream, and this dim world of peace and invigorating breezes the reality.

The Irishman broke into his reverie. "The tide's making turble hasty," he said; "hark to that!"

"That" was the splash of the horses' hoofs in the thin sheet of water which had crept up over the wide, level shore. The luminous point on the Island had apparently swung through an arc of ninety degrees, making the change in the route followed by the phæton, and now gleamed well to their right. The moon had been clouded over unnoticed, and the carriage-lamps threw a twin-halo on the rippling expanse of shallow sea.

A lash at the bays sent them flying forward, swerving as if to reach more directly the faint index of their destination. A hundred yards they went, and then the off-horse plunged and reared, sending a shower of scattered brine into the phæton.

"St. Patrick!" muttered the driver, "we've come too westerly, the beasts are off the ridge, there's two foot under us, sir, we'll have to dodge back a bit."

The creatures answered the reins readily enough, but the tide was flowing on every hand; the horse that had so narrowly escaped a fall jibbed, shivered noisily, and screamed—a shrill and tremulous cry of fear. Its companion shied and hung against the pole; the phæton halted in the waste of water.

"Can ye swim, sir?" observed the Irishman coolly.

Robert Causton assented.

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"Then I'm thinking you'll have to get the rest of the way yourself," he was informed. "I'll stop with the horses, sir, it's not Michael Dowd as would leave the poor brutes he's steered to their death. I'm a clumsy fool, I am, and I'll do my penance for it."

"Nonsense!" retorted the young lawyer, making ready to leave the phæton; "besides, you must guide me ashore."

"Make for the beacon, sir," said Michael Dowd obstinately; "the beach is gravel and no rocks foreninst the light. Give my service to Miss Delia, sir."

Causton, unheeding the advice and the request, stooped over the splash board of the phæton and detached the traces.

"Climb across and rid them of the saddles," he ordered; "they know you. And then you can slip the chains, we must drive them, if they won't stand us mounting."

The Irishman raised a joyous whoop and did as he was bidden. "It's yourself that's the real genius, sir," he called from the withers of the near bay. He was unbuckling girths, freeing collar-irons, and shortening reins.

Meanwhile the swift tide sobbed and gurgled through the carriage wheels, the wavelets were above the hubs, and once the phæton lifted to a roller. Behind were the cluster of luminous sparks that indicated the position of the village; before, the beacon of the Island. All else was vast, windy, and indistinct.

A new sound floated abruptly to the lawyer's ears—the unmistakable lap of divided water under a boat's bows. A novel danger was threatening them, that of being run down. Robert Causton caught up a carriage-lamp and held it high in the direction of the peril. A rattle was heard and a black shadow, monstrous and swaying in the gloom, lessened. A lug sail had been allowed to fall; the low hull and squat mast forged onward, into the glow of the lamp supported by the lawyer.

"By St. Patrick!" yelled the driver of the phæton, "but it's Miss Delia. Heaven be praised."

Robert Causton strained his vision to penetrate the night. He could indeed distinguish that the craft which had approached them was a small fishing coble, impelled by the flapping peak of its half lowered mainsail, and controlled by a feminine figure in abbreviated skirts and a big hat. An arch voice reached them, musical in its suppressed excitement:

"Hullo, Michael!" it said; "sit tight—I'm coming."

The coble glided nearer, the steerswoman skipped over the ballast, dragged down the gaff of the lug, threw out a rusty anchor, and hauled on it. The boat stayed a few inches from the now buoyant phæton and its frightened horses.

The rescuer was some twenty years of age, slight, but graceful, and active. Her dark hair was tumbling from its pins, disarranged by her exertions, and her eyes shone.

"Jump in," she commanded, but checked herself to exclaim: "Oh, the poor gee-gees—I had forgotten them."

Robert Causton raised his neat brown bowler with a grave formality; he had managed to retain that article, despite the excitement.

"They will swim at the stern of the boat," he said; "we were going to try and get them back in some such fashion."

"By Jove!" ejaculated the girl crisply; "so Michael didn't quite lose his head—I'm glad of it."

"'Twasn't my notion, Miss Delia," said the Irishman; "my idea was just to drown with the beasts while Mr. Causton swam back alone."

Delia laughed, she was tethering the bays to the rear of the coble. "If you were as clever as you're plucky, Michael," she remarked, "you'd be a marvel. Come on, the phæton must shift for itself."

Michael Dowd flung in the solicitor's kit-bag and stood aside to let him enter the boat. Causton delivered the carriage-lamp to the Irishman, sprang in over the gunwale, and commenced to loose the anchor chain thwart to which it was secured.

"We'll take a turn or two of this round the body of the phæton," he decided, measuring the small coble with a keen scrutiny, "it can be hauled up to morrow not much the worse, except the stuffing."

"That's a smart dodge," commented the person whom Michael Dowd had addressed as Miss Delia. She was leaning against the mast, and the pose showed to advantage the supple youth of her figure and the proud unconsciousness of her expression.

The device, thus indorsed, was acted on. The carriage, fastened to the anchor of the coble, was temporarily abandoned, the mainsail was hoisted and the little craft, with the horses swimming astern, bore down upon the Island. Ten minutes had scarcely elapsed when she grounded in a sheltered cove, and the bays shook themselves free of the unfamiliar element.

As Michael Dowd improvised a new mooring for the coble, the lawyer, who had made himself responsible for the custody of the horses, turned to his rescuer. "I am Robert Causton," he said, "of London, and Mrs. Tennant's solicitor. Please accept my thanks for the obligation under which you have laid me. May I not know to whom I am indebted?"

The girl smiled; Robert Causton was holding the carriage-lamp they had brought with them, and thought he had never seen a smile at once so mischievous and so gay.

"I—I am Delia Tennant," she rejoined; "and, oh, won't I get into a row for this!"

With which unexpected announcement she flitted away, and was lost in the prevailing obscurity.

CHAPTER II.

Robert Causton's Morning

"TRUST, sir, you have slept well, though the wind did get up about dawn—doubtless you are not accustomed to the sound of the sea."

The solicitor bowed to the maker of this stiffly polite observation. She was angular, self-possessed, high-nosed, and wore a severe gown of black alpaca. Robert Causton himself had risen on her appearance in the small yet pleasant room where he had been breakfasting. The chill, characteristic sunshine of an autumn forenoon flooded the apartment, and shone on the silver plate and trim damask before him. From the window at his elbow he could see the little cove where he had disembarked the previous evening. Across a blue sheet of water—for the tide was nearly full again—was the coast of the Bristol Channel, and the picturesque village of Fawlish.

"Thank you, I spent a most comfortable night," he said, "but tempered by some anxiety about my client. Is she—is she any better?"

The housekeeper folded her arms and sighed. "There are some tokens of a rally," she told him, "or so Dr. Philpot thinks. But in cancer, Mr. Causton, and at

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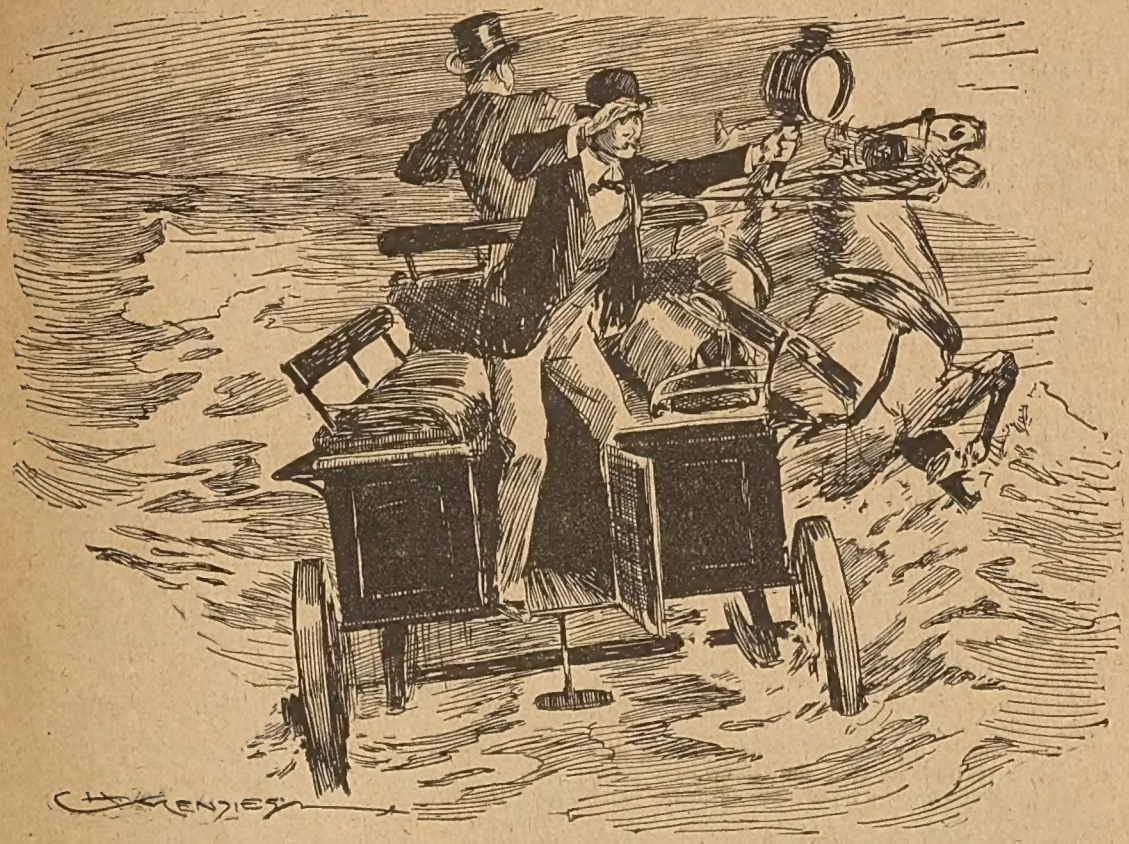

Robert Causton caught up a carriage lamp and held it high in the direction of the peril.

this stage, hope is a delusion. That is why you were sent for—or rather your father was, since Mrs. Tennant was not, and is not so far, aware of his death. Pray be seated, sir, and go on with your breakfast, I only looked in to make sure it was to your liking."

Robert Causton sank back upon his chair, fidgeting with a heavy pencil case; he had been scribbling notes on one and another of a sheaf of documents. "A—a moment, Miss—Miss——" he began, and paused uncertainly.

"Royle is my name, sir," said the housekeeper, "Naomi Royle. It was well known to your father, sir; I've been on Swart Island with Mrs. Tennant a matter of—of nineteen year, I helped her to nurse her first and only child, which was a mite nobody expected to live."

"A long, and I am sure, an honourable service," declared the solicitor courteously. "Pardon me, Miss Royle, if I remind you that I am a busy professional man. My father's decease has inundated me with work, and I should be in town for an important consultation to-day. Can I not run up and return when your patient has rallied sufficiently to receive me?"

Naomi Royle lifted her hands in dismay. "Don't dream of it, sir," she begged; "Mrs. Tennant might slip away at any moment. Dr. Philpot says she mustn't see you for some hours at least, or she will collapse without doing as she wishes. She is only reconciled to the delay by the understanding that you are in the house, and by the doctor's assurance that she is nearing a rally. If I may be so free, sir, I should wish to add that expense is no object, and that what inconvenience we put you to must be reckoned with. Dowd will take letters or telegrams for you to Fawlish, when the tide is in, by trap, and at other times by boat."

Robert Causton resigned himself to the inevitable. "I suppose the horses were none the worse for their adventure," he remarked.

"No, sir," allowed the housekeeper, "which is a blessing, poor creatures—we are indebted to you, sir, for saving them, it seems Dowd clean lost his wits."

"It was not I who brought off the rescue," demurred the lawyer, finishing his cup of tea, "but Miss Tennant. By-the-bye, how is she?"

Miss Royle's harsh features became harsher still, and she moved hurriedly towards the door. "Well, I thank you, sir," she said; "you will please make yourself as comfortable as possible under the circumstances. The Island," she added, pausing after thus unceremoniously changing the subject, "is not large, but you may care to explore it, and there is a boat, sailed by a fisherman who farms a few acres near us. He would be glad to show you round the coast. Good morning, sir."

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Causton raised his eyebrows when Naomi Royle had departed. "By Jupiter!" he muttered, "they don't want me to ask questions about Miss Delia, that's flat. Now I recollect, she said she would get into trouble over that affair last evening. She was as pretty as a picture in the lamplight; I wonder what she would be in the day. Anyhow, she must have sense to understand the danger involved in the wrong trend of the phæton lamps, and pluck, to come off alone in that heavy boat."

He got up, musing, collected his papers, went for his hat, and strolled out on to the lawn which sloped, unfenced, to the beach. From this point the house on the Island was visible as a low, straggling residence, stoutly built and cleverly sheltered. In the sandy bay, beyond the shingle, the fishing-coble was grounded at the edge of the tide. He noticed that she had been anchored, and, judged by the fact and the fresh wheel-marks on the shore, that the phæton had been brought back, in the early morning, from its singular position.

Casually enough, he lounged over to the boat and peered in. To his surprise he beheld, seated on the flooring boards, with her feet tucked under her, and absorbed in the disentangling of a line, Miss Delia Tennant herself.

Robert Causton saluted her respectfully. His acquaintance of the preceding night had nothing to fear from the fuller radiance of the day. Her ample locks and hazel pupils lent force to a countenance peculiarly soft, mirthful and feminine; her dress was short-skirted and plain, and a big blue pinafore covered the whole. She smiled at him archly.

"So you've found me out," she said, pulling at a knot; "please take notice that the blame isn't mine. If you wish to talk to me you must come inside or Naomi will spot you."

A trifle astonished by this frankness, the young solicitor mounted to the coble and paused, regarding her.

Delia made a gesture towards the stern-sheets. "You'll have to plump down," she warned him; "you're not hidden there, you know."

Causton obeyed her curt directions, and picking up a skein of the line, commenced to straighten it. "Do you mind telling me," he queried calmly, "why I have to conduct this interview *sub rosa*, so to speak?"

"*Sub rosa!*" repeated Miss Tennant, poring over an obstinate snarl of hemp; "yes, it's in the end of the dictionary, isn't it, and means on the sly? Well, because I'm being brought up properly, and no girl can be brought up properly who has men running after her. Naomi says so."

"Do men run after you?" asked the solicitor, piqued.

The other considered. "I'm not certain," she said, "they might if they had the chance. But you can't imagine what Naomi is; every second I'm expecting her head to pop up over that gunwale, and to have to go to my room for the rest of the morning. While you, you would simply be ordered off the Island."

Robert Causton laughed; the child-woman, with her imperious ways, her crisp speech, and her dazzling candour, interested him.

"Such cases have occurred before then?" he demanded.

Delia blushed. "Once," she faltered; "he was an engineer—we were having a reservoir built, with a pump for our drinking water. I didn't like him a bit, but I wanted to tease Naomi. If I had cared for him, I should have run away with him—if he had asked me to."

"You—you read novels, of course," ventured Causton, twisting the line about its frame.

"Rather," said the girl. "Michael Dowd smuggles them for me. I've a regular pile in the cave under the hill, 'Ivanhoe,' and 'David Copperfield' (he ran away with Dora Spenlow, you remember), and 'Jane Eyre.' Oh, isn't 'Jane Eyre' the darlingist tale! Would you like to see my books?" she added impulsively, but checked herself. "I'm sorry," she supplemented, "I can't show you them now, not that it matters, I could go through them by heart—I've a very good memory."

"I should be glad to learn," confessed the lawyer, out of his own thoughts, "how you got this clumsy boat off yesterday evening—are your muscles as exceptional as your memory?"

A ripple of merriment answered him. "It was just afloat," said Delia, "the tide comes in quickly at the Island—the shore shelves and the currents are rapid. The moment I saw the phæton lights—we're used to watching for them—pass the bend, I knew Dowd had missed the ridge and slipped into the deep channel. So I cast adrift, rowed off, and hoisted the lug—there was a nice breeze, and I fetched you on the third tack."

"You acted promptly," commented the solicitor, "I can hardly decide which to admire more, your coolness or your dispatch. I suppose, though, you are familiar with boats."

"Only this," replied Delia Tennant, "it's old Amos Godson's—he has fished about Swart Island for years; we let him set night-lines from the rocks, and he delivers our messages and stores. I often sail her myself off the cove here when Amos is on his little farm, Dowd says the fishermen about call me the Lady of the Island. It's mother that ought to be called that, but then they've never seen her—when she drives out it's always in a closed brougham. Oh," she cried, "you're a lawyer, aren't you?"

"I am," assented Causton, "that is, to be exact, a solicitor. My father was your mother's lawyer when I was a lad at Eton. Now he is dead, and I am the principal partner."

Delia clasped her hands over her knees. "You are going to do something about mamma's will," she said; "don't people usually make wills when they're expecting to die?"

Robert Causton hesitated. "Sometimes," he rejoined, "by no means usually."

Miss Tennant nodded, appreciating the distinction. "Then my mother isn't—isn't very ill," she interpreted. "Oh, Mr. Causton, I am glad, I have been dreadfully afraid she was. Dr. Philpot and Naomi put me off, but you wouldn't deceive me, I can read it in your face that you are honest."

The young lawyer hesitated. "You—you asked me a general question," he objected, "and I answered it truthfully." Causton caught himself wondering *why* the idea of deceiving her was so repugnant to him. "Your mother," he pursued, "is, I regret to admit, gravely unwell, but everyone hopes for the best."

Delia's lip trembled and her lashes grew wet. "I was right," she said, "you haven't cheated me with a stupid lie, it was Dr. Philpot and Naomi who did that. I—I understand you, my—my mother is dying."

She dashed her sunburnt palms to her eyes, and her head drooped. Causton comtemplated her piteous figure, and an inexplicable emotion stirred in his breast.

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Suddenly a bird-like cry arose on the air—thrice it was reiterated and thrice it faded into silence. Delia sprang up, shaking the tears from her lashes.

"I must go," she told him; "I have stayed out too long—I'm—I'm not sorry I met you, Mr. Causton, you've let me know the truth about mamma. They've been treating me as if I were a baby."

She extended her hand, and the solicitor grasped it warmly. "Don't misunderstand me," he murmured, "your mother is seriously ill, but she is on the verge of a rally. She may live for a year, for two years, even more. I have no justification for explaining these things to you, but you are, as you say, a woman, and you have proved yourself a brave one."

Delia Tennant glanced up at him quickly, and the colour throbbed in her cheeks. But she did not answer except by that mute gaze and girlish flush, and leaping on to a thwart of the boat, jumped down and hurried off. She had not crossed to the house, the bird-like cry had been heard again, and Delia, hastening her steps, flitted up a narrow path that ascended the cliff.

The triple cry lingered on the young lawyer's ear; it might have passed for that of a gull, but there was a tremulous inflection in it that suggested the human mimic. Why had it so abruptly withdrawn Delia Tennant from his side. Robert Causton, though he would have been the last to own the fact, became profoundly curious. The sensation was mingled with a spice of unconscious jealousy. He stalked out of the coble, and traversing the beach, took to a higher level of the hill than that trodden by Delia.

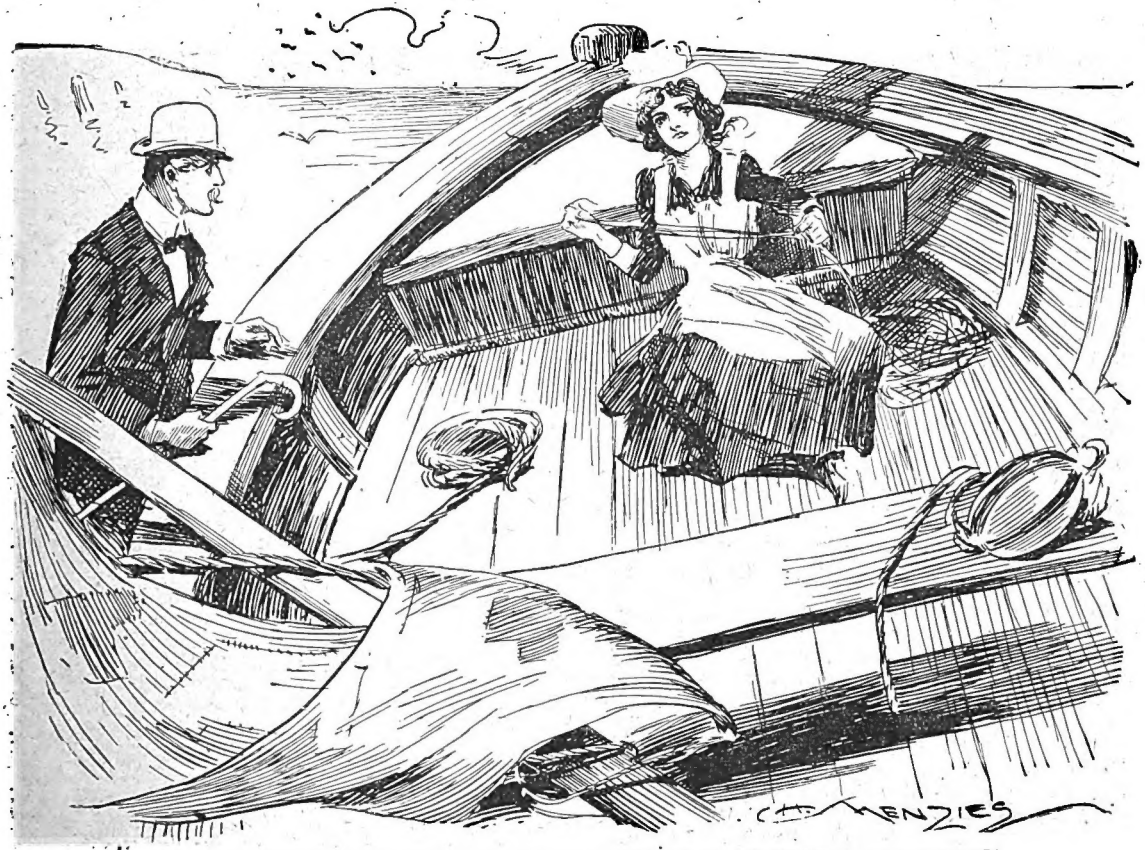
Slowly he gained the rough promontory forming the most distinctive characteristic of the Island on its inner coast. It was green to the edge, which fell away in jagged stairs, patched with occasional turf and mountain immortelles.

From an eminence of the lofty cape, yet screened by a taller rock, Causton reconnoitred the position, to perceive Delia on the very brink of the abyss, her blue pinafore and flapping hat tossed by the wind, while their wearer was engaging in conversation with a person who occupied a scarcely less dangerous nook of the precipice. This latter was a man, tall, grey-haired, stooping, and shabbily clad.

As the solicitor completed his survey Delia moved backwards, and both she and her companion vanished as utterly as if they had never existed.

A shiver crept over Robert Causton, but he recollected Delia's words, "the cave under the hill." She had offered to take him thither, and had instantly cancelled her invitation. Was that grey-haired, stooping personage the cause of her retreat from the proposal?

Causton stared at the giddy descent, mechanically preparing a cigarette for lighting. The match in his fingers halted, unstruck! Below him a head and shoulders emerged above a shallow rampart of stone. The



"So you've found me out?" she said, pulling at a knot. "Please take notice that the blame isn't mine."

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face was visible, and the lawyer had recognised it—it was that of a well-known London detective, and he was peering in the direction of the spot where the girl and the man had disappeared.

Robert Causton shrank more closely into the species of recess which screened him. His mind was busy with conjecture. But ere he could form a definite statement of the problem that had presented itself, Delia reappeared and glided up the slope. At sight of her, the figure, which the solicitor's professional experience had enabled him to recognise, ducked, and became invisible.

Ignorant of the double espionage that had been maintained upon her, Delia hurried by Causton's place of concealment. He darted after her, shielding himself dexterously from the possible view of the detective. If there were anything in progress demanding the attention of the authorities, it behoved him to act with caution.

Overtaking Miss Delia Tennant, he called to her in a whisper. She turned and a look of disdain thinned her features.

"Mr. Causton," she said coldly, "you've—you've been spying on me. And I thought you were a gentleman."

The lawyer winced. "My curiosity is the measure of my interest in you, Miss Tennant," he responded firmly; "in any case it may be worth mentioning that I was not the only witness of your proceedings, and those of your companion. At the back of that huge boulder there lies hidden a certain Samuel Bevan, a smart detective officer from London, and well known to almost every lawyer in the metropolis. You yourself will judge if the information has any bearing on your objection to my—my spying."

Delia caught at his arm. "Oh," she gasped, "forgive me; it wasn't my secret, or I would have trusted you, I would, indeed. We must tell Naomi, quickly, she will decide what to do."

Robert Causton paused. "Had I not better keep an eye on Master Bevan?" he suggested.

"No, no!" retorted Delia, "nobody could ever find the cave under the hill without they were shown it. But Naomi must be told immediately."

The solicitor yielded to her impatience, they scrambled down the steep path together, and entered the house at the head of the tiny bay.

Miss Naomi Royle met them in the hall. "Mr. Causton," she said, "I was about to send in search of you. Will you come to Mrs. Tennant's room at once? I have explained to her that you have taken your father's place. Be quiet and rapid, as she is very weak, Dr. Philpot is with her."

She led the way to a door on an upper landing. Delia followed them, awed by the housekeeper's haggard visage, yet eager to make her momentous communication.

As the solicitor passed into the sick chamber Delia drew Naomi Royle back, and whispered to her excitedly.

CHAPTER III.
The End of the Day.

"ALL else that I die possessed of to my dear daughter, Delia Tennant, especially the long lease of Swart Island and the house on it. And I charge her to continue, as, indeed, I know she will, the payment I have made for so many years towards a charitable object, the nature of which she has lately learnt."

Robert Causton finished reading the formal sentences.

"And the executors?" he said, glancing at the white countenance on the pillow hard by. The sick woman turned her head and parted her dry lips.

"Naomi Royle," she murmured, "and—and—" She put out a frail hand and pushed at the shade of the lamp, so that its rays fell on the features of the young solicitor. "And yourself," she said, then collapsed upon the tumbled bed.

The lawyer wrote down the necessary phrases and rose, with his pen in his hand. But another figure had stepped to the side of the couch—that of a grave, well proportioned man, in the prime of life.

"One moment, Mr. Causton," he whispered, and touched the thin wrist on the counterpane. His brows knitted, he poured out some brandy into a medicine cup, and slipped the mouthpiece between his patient's lips.

"Open the window," he requested curtly, "and ring to hasten Miss Royle. You must be quick or the will may go unsigned."

Causton acted on the double instruction. As he threw up the sash he realised suddenly that the obtaining of her final directions from the dying woman had cost hours. The tide was full again, and the moon high in the heavens. In the azure strait that separated Swart Island and the coast of Devonshire rode a steamer—a long, black cargo-boat, strangely out of place in that open and unfrequented anchorage. On the beach beneath, the fishing coble swayed to the wavelets, its sails loose, its keel half-grounded. By her floated a small pair-oar boat.

A moment later, Robert Causton had pulled the bell-cord and a firm step in the passage without betokened the approach of Naomi herself. Additional footsteps neared the threshold—a light and a heavy one. They were those of Delia Tennant and the Irish coachman, Michael Dowd. The three entered, to perceive that the doctor had raised his patient skilfully, her emaciated form was supported against his shoulder.

"Now, Mr. Causton," he said significantly. The lawyer slipped the pen into the fingers of the dying woman and the sunken lids opened. The pupils under were clear and comprehending.

"You sign this, Mrs. Tennant," queried Robert Causton distinctly, "as your last will and testament?"

"I do," faltered his client, and the syllables were scarcely heard in the silence of the room. But she scrawled her name at the bottom of the document with a determined effort that brought the beaded sweat to her cheeks and forehead. The physician laid her down gently, and administered another mouthful of brandy.

Robert Causton was obtaining the signatures of the witnesses, Naomi supplied hers, calm and resolute as ever. But the Irishman's face was wet with tears.

"You will leave Mrs. Tennant to me now, gentlemen," said the housekeeper, dismissing Michael Dowd by means of a peremptory gesture, and turning almost haughtily to the others. "She has one more person to see before she can die in peace."

She threw wide the door and the solicitor strode towards it. He paused, to look about for Delia. She had disappeared. The doctor had stayed for a word with Naomi, he caught up the young lawyer, and they went out together. In the corridor Delia passed them—she was leading a person clad in a dark overcoat, and wearing a soft hat pulled down on to his brows. But Robert Causton had a glimpse of loose grey locks and knew her companion was the same that he

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had seen in conversation with her upon the cliff. Before he could complete his scrutiny, the latch clicked and he was alone in the corridor with the doctor.

The physician held out his hand. "Good-night, Mr. Causton," he observed, "it is no use my remaining, she will drift away about midnight or earlier. Poor soul, hers has been a sad life and yet her daughter will miss her. You and I," he continued, feeling for his gloves and drawing them on, "could read between the lines of all this if we chose, but it would not be wise to recognise the act, even though we are professional men, and must preserve out client's secrets. *Au revoir*, I have a boat and an oarsman in the cove, and there are patients in Fawlish whom I can help."

He nodded cheerfully, and stalked off down the corridor. Robert Causton gasped. Suddenly a gleam of comprehension broke in upon him. There must have been some scandal in the Tennant family, which his father and the grave medical man who had just left him had been acquainted with. Such scandals are not always committed to writing in lawyers' offices, and the elder Causton had died without confiding this to his son. No doubt the latter was supposed by his client to understand precisely that which, as it was, he could only guess at.

But what could be the nature of the scandal, what the reason for Mrs. Tennant's so singularly postponing the preparation of her will, what the identity of that disguised figure at present with the dying woman, what the cause of a detective's secret visit to the Island? The solicitor exhausted himself in speculations; but the thought of Delia Tennant dominated them all.

Thus musing, Robert Causton strode to the extremity of the corridor, where an oriel window commanded the cove below. Here he stood for some while, and then a footfall in the passage at his back made him face about. It was Naomi Royle and the mysterious unknown. Not noticing him they hastened down the curving staircase—soon he saw them emerge upon the beach and move towards the fishing-coble at the water's edge. The little craft was floating in the wash of the tide.

They entered its black shadow, yet he could discern that Naomi had halted, while her companion had pressed on, wading knee-deep. A dark shape aided him into the boat, the lug-sail crawled up the mast, the canvas bellied to the wind, and the boat crept from the shore. The housekeeper watched it steadily as it stole forth upon the rippling strait. Ten minutes after it had glided to the lean cargo-steamer that lay off the Island.

The two vessels blended their shadows for a time, and then the coble slid astern, the steamer, forging ahead, gathered way, and faded in the night. Naomi Royle abandoned her post and came towards the house.

When Causton heard her foot once more upon the stair he changed his position to bar her passage. She glanced up and he could tell that under her iron exterior some powerful emotion was fighting with her reserve.

"What is the purport of all this?" he asked abruptly. "I am a lawyer, Miss Royle, and there is such a thing as becoming an accessory after the fact. As Miss Tennant will have told you, a detective is in hiding on the Island. Of whom is he in search?"

Naomi Royle answered him harshly, but her voice trembled. "Of Valentine Tennant," she said, "fratricide and outlaw, who has looked his last on a dying wife and an only child. Fifteen years ago he killed his brother, out of jealousy for a young and flighty wife, who, nevertheless, loved him dearly. He fled the country, was outlawed, and his estates forfeited. But his wife knew herself to blame, and would not will her own property away from him, until she realised that it was necessary for Delia's sake."

The housekeeper glanced from the window, the cargo-steamer had vanished utterly.

"We have always been aware of his hiding-place abroad," she pursued, "and lately we wrote him that Mrs. Tennant was dying. He swore to come home and see her, if he should be hanged for it. Once here, he convinced Mrs. Tennant that if she did not will her fortune and the lease of the Island to Miss Delia, they would pass to him, and be forfeit to the Crown. Now you understand everything, Mr. Causton, but the law cannot touch you, for Valentine Tennant is no longer within your reach or mine."

She stepped by him—determinedly rather than hastily—and went along the corridor. As she neared the sick-room there was a low cry from its interior—a piteous, girlish cry, and the sound of a fall.

Naomi sprang in and darted to the bedside—her mistress' jaw had settled into the last grim position and Delia lay insensible on the floor.

* * * *

The next day Robert Causton returned to London, to devote a few breathless hours to the interests of his neglected clients before retracing his steps to the West Coast, to arrange for the administration of the late Mrs. Tennant's estate. Glancing down an evening paper in his club the same night, he discovered a startling paragraph:

"The body of Mr. Samuel Bevan, a distinguished member of the Scotland Yard detective establishment, was found this afternoon among the rocks on Swart Island, off the Devon coast. It is supposed that the deceased officer was exploring this romantic spot, when he lost his footing and fell from the cliffs. Oddly enough, the owner of the Island, which is private property, died last night."

And this is how it comes to pass that the real route to the cave under the hill, where Valentine Tennant was concealed during his dangerous visit to England—a visit which, by some means, had reached the ears of the police, is unknown to any but Delia Tennant, Naomi Royle, and Robert Causton. Delia herself showed it to the last-named on one of his frequent little holidays at the house on Swart Island—holidays that ended ultimately in his becoming to some extent a proprietor of this piece of British territory. That is if a man can be said to share his wife's property in the long lease of an Island.

As for Valentine Tennant, during many years a certain sum per annum was remitted by Delia Causton to a banker in the Argentine "for an agreed purpose." At length the banker wrote that the "beneficiare" no longer called for the amounts. Then it was that Delia told her husband, what he had always guessed, that it had been paid for her father, and that he was now dead.

When, in the course of time, the present possessors of Swart Island pass away, the secret of a very curious hiding-place will die with them. Should it itself ever be recovered, it is doubtful whether the chief feature of the "cave under the hill" will be ascertained. This is its second exit, a funnel-shaped air-hole traversable by an agile climber. It was through the aperture in question that Valentine Tennant escaped to his wife's death-bed, notwithstanding the vigilance of the luckless Mr. Samuel Bevan. R. NORMAN SILVER.

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How Fate Decides.

"I PARTICULARLY desire, Kate, that this may be the last experiment of the kind that you will try."

George Germond spoke gravely, with a deep line between his brows, and his lips formed into a cold, stern line. Kate Brewster tossed her pretty head.

"There's no occasion for your being so cross about it, George," said she. "It's only a frolic."

"A pretty frolic to walk deliberately into a room full of men in the disguise of an orange girl, selling oranges."

"Well, what then? Weren't my oranges good?"

"Kate, do you want to drive me frantic?" expostulated the aggrieved lover.

"Well, go on with your lecture."

"Answer me—do you think it was a ladylike or a dignified thing to do?"

"N—not exactly," faltered poor Kate, while Mr. Germond gloomed down upon her like an avenging genius.

"I wish it to be distinctly understood," he went on, "that if our engagement is to proceed—if, I say—you are to pledge me your solemn word of honour never again to let yourself be drawn into any of this absurd masquerading."

Kate's colour deepened, and her eyes flashed ominously.

"I do not choose to bind myself by any promise, George Germond," said she. "It was only a freak of mine to pass myself off on you and your cousins, and Henry St. John, as an orange vendor. You—none of you—would ever have suspected my identity if I had not told you afterwards."

"You will not promise, Kate?"

"No. I will not promise. If you cannot trust me without——"

"Exactly," hotly interrupted Germond. "I cannot trust you. You have spoken well."

"Then we had better part."

"Now, Kate, don't be so unreasonable. You know that I love you—you know that I have only your best interests at heart. This mania for acting will surely, sooner or later, bring you to grief. Promise me, darling, that you will give it up. Promise me not to take part in Mrs. Synclare's theatricals next month."

"Never!" was Kate's spirited reply.

"Very well," said Germond, deeply offended. "Then you know the consequences."

"That is just as you please."

And she courtesied him imperially out of the room.

"So let it be!" she cried, dashing the briny drops out of her eyes. "I will not cramp the royal gifts God has given me to suit the narrow ideas of any man alive. I feel that I can merge myself entirely in the identities of the creatures of other geniuses—and I am determined, sooner or later, to go on the stage. I fancied I loved him, but I could never thoroughly respect a man whose soul ran in such despicably narrow grooves!"

People shook their heads when Kate Brewster resigned her situation in a flourishing academy for young ladies, and accepted a fourth-rate opportunity to go on the stage during the engagement of a star actress.

"I have only to walk on and off, and say four or five words, mamma," pleaded Kate; "and I have such a good chance to study Mrs. Legrange!"

"But, my love, this can only end in disappointment and distaste for ordinary occupations!"

"You'll see, mamma," said Kate, brightly.

"If you had been a sensible girl and married young Germond——!"

"I should have felt like a caged bird all my days! Only wait, mamma; only wait and see!"

Mrs. Legrange, the beautiful English actress, had the rare perceptions belonging to her sex. Among all the "subs" she saw and noticed the dark-eyed girl with the square brow, and the red, mobile mouth.

"That girl has the making of an artist in her," said she; "bring her to me."

And the upshot of the matter was, that when Mrs. Legrange went back to London, Kate Brewster and her mother went, too.

Years afterwards the denizens of her native town never knew that Katherine Bruce, the brilliant young tragedienne, who was nightly playing to such full houses, was the Kate Brewster who had once been a schoolmistress in their midst.

* * * * *

"George Germond! ill and in trouble? I used to know a George Germond!"

Miss Bruce spoke impetuously. A circle of literary and dramatic connoisseurs were sitting in her private sitting-room at the Valentia Hotel. Mrs. Brewster, in black satin and valenciennes lace, presided at the tea urn, and looked with admiring eyes at the royally-beautiful woman into which her young daughter had blossomed during the last ten years.

Kate herself, in a deep blue silk, with draperies of black lace and a diamond cross sparkling at her throat stood by the marble mantel in an attitude unconsciously graceful.

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"He's managed his business affairs poorly," said Mrs. Rosser. "Everything has gone wrong, and his wife, a poor, little helpless thing, with no merit on earth but a pretty face, has helped to drag him down. They say he is nearly wild, threatens to commit suicide, and all that sort of thing!"

"Oh, he mustn't do that," said Kate. "I'll go to see him."

"You, dearest?" remonstrated her mother.

"Yes, mamma; why shouldn't I? Old friends ought to be the first to help one another, and I've long ago given up those silly scruples which draw so impassable a barrier between a girl and her old lover. I'll go to-morrow."

* * * * *

"A lady to see me! I don't want to see anyone! Tell her so."

George Germond spoke hoarsely, and in the same instant he pushed a loaded revolver under the folds of the table-cover, but the visitor followed too closely on the footsteps of the scared little servant-maid to admit of the message of denial being delivered.

She was tall and regal in her mien, but a close black veil concealed her face as she walked directly to the table, and taking up the insufficiently-hidden pistol, flung it out of the window into a cluster of leafless bushes in the garden.

"It is only a coward, George Germond," said she, "who would run away from the troubles of this world rather than face and conquer them."

"Kate Brewster!" he exclaimed.

"Yes," said she, laughing, "Kate Brewster, or rather Katherine Bruce, as they call me now."

"Are you, then, Katherine Bruce, the successful actress—the queen of the modern stage? Oh, Kate, I never dreamt of this!"

"But I didn't come here to talk about myself," she said, independently. "It is you that I am interested in. Are you really ruined?"

"Yes." He set his teeth gloomily. "Past help—past recall."

"Will a loan of a thousand pounds help you to regain the lost position?"

"Where am I to get a thousand pounds?"

"I will lend it to you. I have it to spare. I was going to take my lawyer's advice and invest it in mines, but I'm not particular as to its destination. You can have it to-morrow. Now let's see the wife and babies. Don't thank me—thanks are a nuisance. I shall expect fair interest and good security."

Mrs. Germond, a little pallid, fair-haired creature, in the last stages of consumption, lay on a sofa within. She looked up anxiously as Kate swept in.

"If you are another of my husband's creditors—" she began in a trembling voice.

"I am not, but I'm going to be," said Kate. "May I kiss you, my dear? I am a very old friend of your husband's."

So the young actress brought comfort and blessing to the home of poor George Germond. She never told his wife of the pistol, nor did Germond himself ever afterwards allude to it.

Mrs. Germond died in the spring—the burial roses were glowing on her cheeks when Kate first saw her. And according to the rule and plummet of romance, the old lovers ought to have got married when a decent period of mourning had expired.

But they didn't.

Mr. Germond would have been more than pleased with such an arrangement, but Miss Brewster calmly shook her head.

"No," said she, "I shall never marry."

George Germond said nothing, but he thought of how magnificently Kate's life had blossomed and rounded itself out—of how wretched a failure his own had been. And it was in no wise a consolatory reflection that it had been his own fault.

Perhaps, after all, it was as well that George Germond and Kate Brewster never were married. A man does not like to feel that his wife is superior to him, neither is it altogether a pleasant position for a woman to occupy. Fate often arranges things better than we can do.

Stewart Loftus.

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THE SNOW-WHITE MARE.

In the valley, about six miles above the forks of the Teton River, in Northern Montana, is the Blackfoot Indian Agency. A high stockade of split logs standing on end, deeply sunk in the earth, incloses about two acres of ground. Heavy gates, opening outward, sway harshly on great iron hinges. A well is in the centre of the inclosure. Low log buildings, covered with earth, are scattered along the stockade.

A couple of sandhill cranes stood expectantly at the well, waiting patiently for a thirsty man to draw water. A white-tailed deer, with a broad blue ribbon on her neck, walked daintily around. Her cool black muzzle, studded with drops of dew, brilliant in the slanting rays of the rising sun, was slyly thrust into my hand, giving me a slight shock of surprise.

By the stables stood a cow moose, standing so awkwardly with crooked legs and humped back, and the pendulous lip which Mark Twain calls "the Hapsburg," that her very ugliness excited my pity. A moose calf —her miniature in ugliness—stood stupidly at her side.

Standing at the well, facing the great Rocky Mountain range, I drew a bucketful of water. Drinking deeply, repulsing the while the advances of the female crane with my moccasined foot, I got the reward of all men who reject the advances of the tender sex, and was soon engaged in repelling a furious advance on me by the long-legged twain. The attack was fierce. Their long hard bills clashed viciously as they scornfully scolded me, and I was on the point of beating a disgraceful retreat, when I heard:

"Ho, Frank; come, have a mouthful of whisky?"

Recognising the voice, I gladly left the cranes in undisputed possession of the water bucket, and walked across the parade to the store of the fur company.

Bidding Burr "Good morning," I declined the whisky on grounds unnecessary to state; yet the barrel had a yellow head, and—and—well, I knew the tap. I sat and talked to Burr, who was in charge of this extensive store, and before breakfast he went over it with me. A curious stock. Everything you could not find in an Eastern country store was here. As we walked he explained the business to me. Alluring? Not at all. He, looking at his watch, said:

"We have yet time before breakfast to look at my mare."

The sudden change in the expression of the voice, the softening of the eyes, as this hard Indian trader spoke of his horse, excited my curiosity, and I went with him. He took me to a low log stable, the chinks carefully mudded, the open shutter and door well made and carefully fitted, so as to exclude the buffalo gnats in season. A few short, heavy chains, stretching from post to post, kept the horse in and the other animals out. With breast pushing against the topmost chain, with her handsome broad head thrust out, and alert ears cocked forward, stood a snow-white mare. She was looking at the moose with a surprised expression on her face, as much as to say: "Well, you have not grown handsomer during the night."

Burr whistled and with a joyful neigh the mare turned her head towards him and bade him welcome. The greeting between man and animal was almost tender. The mare rubbed her nose gently against his breast, and the man stood softly stroking her delicate neck. Unlocking the chains, they dropped. Burr walked towards the well. The mare, with dainty steps, arched neck, and flecking tail, followed him behind, or, caressingly advancing to his side, rubbed her body against his, as though the mere contact with the man was grateful to her. His arm instinctively lifted and dropped across her neck.

The two walked on together, unconscious of any incongruity. A bucket of water stood at the well. The high-bred creature smelt of it, and detecting my previous presence, disdainfully refused to drink after me. Emptying the bucket Burr drew another, and of this the mare drank slowly, her white face gradually sinking into the shallow vessel.

All across the parade, on the return to the stable, the love scene was re-enacted. As they passed me, the mare showed her aversion to a stranger by laying back her ears and thrusting out her white-toothed muzzle towards me in a vicious manner, causing me to step back hastily. They passed into the darkness of the stable. Burr comes out with a bucket, puts up the topmost chain, and goes after barley. The mare, with

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outstretched head, looks after him with kind eyes. Again she saw me, and, with wide-open mouth, reached the post to pay me the attentions of her dislike. Returning to the stable with a full bucket of barley, Burr passed in. I heard him pour the grain into the feed-box; I heard him speak to the mare as his "dear girl," and I heard him—kiss her.

A singular gentleness had come over this hard man, steeled to human suffering and woe, whose business it was to impoverish Indians, to destroy their morals, to brutify them with the fiend, alcohol. He sat at the breakfast table, silently thinking, with his antelope steaks and trout untasted before him. Watching the softened face, I wondered what was the story. So I said:

"Burr, why do you love that white mare?"

He looked kindly at me; and, with a sad smile, replied: "To-night, after the men are in bed, I will tell you the story." Then briskly: "Frank, this is not business. Eat, my boy, then clear out and fish or hunt. You will find some prairie hens in the big willow thicket about five miles below here. I saw them the other day. Shoot some. To-night we will have a feast, and I will open my last two bottles of sherry, and we will talk." His face hardened. The cold, deadly look returned to the grey eyes, and our breakfast was soon finished.

Shouldering my rifle, I stepped out of the stockade and slowly walked down the valley. On the distant hillsides antelope grazed; down the valley before me I could see a few deer running for cover to the willows by the stream. Now and then a grouse rose before me and flew rapidly away. Resisting all temptations to shoot at anything, I walked steadily on.

Climbing a hill, I sat on a rock and musingly gazed at the vast plains to the north-east, at the foothills of the range, and at the rugged, rocky range beyond. I love the Rocky Mountains, and never tire of their face. I wasted hours in looking, and in thinking of the many tales I had heard of the range. When the sun was high above me, I started for the willows. There I neatly shot the heads off six grouse. Then, jointing a light trout pole, I whipped the clear pools of the south fork of the Teton, and was soon rewarded by a string of fine half-pound trout.

Then came the pleasant walk back through the cool, dry air, and over the crisp grass of the north. What a luxury life was in the valley of the Teton. I turned my spoils over to the smiling Indian woman who acted as cook for Burr. The rest of the day I spent on horseback, running antelope with a lot of half-blood Indians. At eight o'clock supper was eaten. The sherry was brought out, and I scattered on the table a handful, my last, of Rosa Conchas, that had never paid duty, and, as we sat smoking, Burr told me this story:

"In the autumn of '88 I thought it might be profitable to start a trading-post in the Yellowstone Valley. Learning from the Blackfeet that the Sioux were camped on the south side of the river, I determined to ride over and see what arrangements I could make with them. I crossed the Belt Mountains, and, riding down the valley, was soon at their camp, I on the north side of the river, they on the south.

"I sat on my horse and hailed the camp. No answer. I could see plenty of Indians walking about, and again I hailed. No answer. I shouted myself hoarse, and the only notice taken of me was by an old buck, who walked to the river bank, looked at me, made an insulting gesture, and slowly walked off. I went there to trade, and, having got angry at the treatment, though I well knew that I ought to leave the valley at once, I, like a fool, resolved to cross the stream and brave the danger, so I forded and rode into the camp. I spoke to no one; no one spoke to me. The sullen braves turned their backs on me as I rode up the street. The young girls looked curiously at me. Riding slowly along I cooled rapidly. I saw that I was not wanted, and I at last fully realised that I was in danger. I did not dare to ride to the south, out of the camp, nor did I have courage enough to attempt to recross the river.

"Before me stood a great tent made of buffalo skins. It was the largest I had ever seen. I halted, dismounted, and stood silently at my horse's head. No one noticed me. Indians went past me, apparently not seeing me. At last a young woman came and stood before me.

"Looking straight into my eyes, she said: 'What do you want?' I looked her coldly in the face and made no reply. Smiling, she asked, 'What brings you here?' Steadily I gazed into her eyes and was voiceless. She left me and disappeared into the great lodge.

"Soon an Indian warrior in full paint, with bow and strung arrow in his hands, came to me. Speaking Blackfoot, he said: 'Why are you in this camp?' To him I replied: 'I wish to trade with you.' More men came. They took my horse, and seizing hold of my arm they led me into the great lodge. Here I was seated and a council was held. I sat and listened to them talk of what was best to do with such a presumptuous white man. Some were in favour of trading. The large majority of the Indians were in favour of torturing me.

"It was soon decided that I should be tortured; and they sat and discussed the many methods. After a two days' talk it was decided to burn me. I was in a strange condition mentally. I would listen to a plan of torture as though it was some other man they were talking about; and I would comment to myself on that plan as giving the chap but little chance of life. But when the dusky brave, who talked Blackfoot, told me that I was to die by fire the next day, I understood perfectly well that I was the man they had been talking about, and replied: 'I know it.' Clustering round me they asked if I had understood all the talk. 'Yes, I had.' 'Then why not answer the maiden when she spoke to you?' 'I came, not to talk to squaws, but to trade with men.' No use, I could do nothing by soft talk, and, having played my hand, finally resigned myself to my fate.

"I noticed that the girl who had first spoken to me in front of the lodge was watching me. She would quickly glance at me, and then drop her eyes on the buckskin shirt she was embroidering with Crow hair. Several times I noticed this, and once I replied with a smile. The lodge emptied. All were gone except the girl. She came quickly to my side, apparently to refold some buffalo robes, and in a whisper said: 'You are to die to-morrow. To-night I will have the best horse in the camp saddled and standing on the outside of the lodge. I will have the tent cut from the outside. You jump through, mount, and ride for your life. You may escape. You will burn if you stay.' Then, with a smile: 'The mare is mine. She is the fastest animal in the valley of Yellowstone. I give her to you.' She left me, and quickly resumed her work.

"As she wove the hair of many Crow scalp-locks into the shirt, I sat looking thankfully at her. She never looked at me again. As I saw a chance for my life my heart beat so loudly that I thought it would be heard. I calmed my face and waited. I ate fairly of supper. I smoked a pipe. All were very kind and attentive to me. Night was passing away, and still

the Indians lingered, looking at the man they were to burn on the morrow. I leant back against the tent to rest myself, when I felt a hand gently pushing me forward. Sitting whistling, I felt the point of a knife come through and strike my neck. I did not flinch. I could feel the blood trickle down my back. I could feel the knife drawn carefully down until it hit the ground. Still whistling, I waited, my heart thumping, my blood on fire—waited a minute to give whoever cut the tent time to escape. Then grasping my heart and nerves for an instant, I gathered myself together, and turned backward through the opening.

"Instantly jumping to my feet, I vaulted into the saddle that was on the back of a white horse that stood there, and in the midst of yells, of rifle shots, of a pack of howling dogs, we rushed out of the camp. It seemed to me as though a thousand horsemen were in pursuit of me instantly. We galloped up the river to a bend I had seen. Dashing in, we forded it under a fire that made the water boil around us, and were out of water, and on the level land to the north of the river, before any of the Sioux were halfway across. Striking the trail to the Bozeman Pass, I took it, and knowing it, pushed boldly on, and though hotly pursued, my horse outlasted theirs, and I escaped. I never drew rein until I dismounted to the west of the pass.

"The girl saved me. With any other horse I should have been recaptured and burnt. I have not got the girl. The love I have for her the mare has instead. I returned to my post, and made no trade in the Yellowstone that year.

"Again. Last winter the snow was on the ground in January, and for three days I had been hunting for running antelope. The sun was very bright, and my eyes hurt me. I saw specks floating about; little chains with small links were constantly before me. My eyes burnt smartly when I returned to the agency. Daily, while hunting, I had seen the low, black clouds in the north that indicate the formation or marshalling of the winds of the frozen north. Daily the south wind swept them beyond the northern horizon; but the next morning found them looming portentously in the northern sky. On my return to the agency I found a runner had just got in from Belly River, in British America, with important news for me. It was necessary that I should go up at once. I started the next morning. My eyes hurt dreadfully.

"I always go to the Belly River, when the snow is on the ground, by the way of the Sweet Grass Hills, and there I camp one night. One side of the hills is always bare of snow, and there is a spring of good water on the northern side of the centre hill. A strong south wind was blowing when I started, but by noon I saw clouds to the north suddenly rise up. I knew that the marshalling of the north winds was completed, and they were eager for the assault on the soft south wind. On came the black cloud. The south wind still blew fiercely, but it could not stem the assault from the arctic region. Birds flew south before the storm; antelope and deer were running for shelter. I had reached my camping ground, and stood looking far off to the north, seeing the landmarks disappear one by one as the head of the 'blizzard' reached them and shrouded them in its icy breath. A calm. Then, with a mighty rush and a loud noise, the head of the 'blizzard' swept past me.

"The air was filled with particles of ice that cut through almost horizontally, and seemed as if they would never fall. Colder, ever colder, grew the wind, and denser the air as the ice particles thickened. I sought shelter in the rocks. Buckling the clothing on the mare I turned her loose, knowing that she would not leave me. Then I lay down in my blankets, and wrapping my beaver cloak around me, I tried to sleep. I began thinking, and could not sleep. The buffalo had not come south that winter, and the wolves were gaunt and hungry. As they follow a horseman over the plains in the summer, so they do in the winter, only more of them, and those great, gaunt, famine-breeders, the grey and black ones, go in largely increased numbers. I had a pack of them at my heels all day, and now they cropped up in my thoughts.

"Finally I slept. When I awoke it was dark. Holding up my naked hand, I felt the icy sweat of the blizzard strike sharply against it. The roar of the wind still continued. I waited, it seemed to me, for hours, when suddenly I felt my mare paw my breast. I spoke kindly to her, saying she had made a mistake. Soon she pawed me again, and I arose to find that all was dark; that I could not see the white mare. Alarmed, I struck a match under my cloak and looked down to see the blaze. I saw nothing, but the match burnt my fingers. With a desolating despondency I realised the fact that the glare of the snow encountered for the past few days had made me snow-blind; that I was fifty miles from the nearest house, and unable to see; that a furious storm was raging.

"Stupid, almost wild with horror, I thought I could hear the snuffing of the wolves, and the soft patter of their feet below the wild shriek of the arctic winds. I was simply benumbed with terror. The mare recalled me to myself by rubbing her cold muzzle against my face. She saw that something was wrong with me, but what she could not comprehend. I resolved to saddle her, to feed her, and, after she ate, to mount and let her take her own course. So I fed her the remaining measure of barley, and waited for her to eat.

"Then I saddled up, and without bridling, mounted, and, wrapping my cloak round me, sat steadily in the saddle, awaiting the frisky action of the high-strung animal. She stood trembling until I told her to go. Then I felt her turn until the ice drops struck obliquely on my right side and back, and she rapidly walked off. Not a motion or movement did she make to discompose my seat. Wrapped in my cloak, with hood drawn over my face, warm and encouraged with hope, I patiently sat on the horse. I could now hear the snarling of the wolves, and my only fear was that they, rendered desperate by hunger, might attack the mare. I dismissed the thought—would not think of it. If they did attack us, we were lost; if they did not, I thought we were safe.

"All day the 'blizzard' raged and tore icily around and on us. The mare walked rapidly or cantered slowly on. It seemed to me that we had been travelling for days, for weeks even, when the mare stopped and neighed loudly. Reaching forward, I felt the rough stockade; dismounting, I felt the hinges of the gate. Loudly I called. Then I took my rifle from the saddle, and rapidly I handled cartridges into it. At last a sleepy voice from the inside called: 'Who is there?' I answered 'Burr; and I am snow-blind. Come to me.' They came, and I was saved—saved for the second time by the white mare. Do you wonder that I, not having the Sioux maiden, love her mare?"

I sat by the bright fire, with my feet high upon the stool, and did not answer—simply sat and smoked, and thought of the girl, of the man, of the mare.

JAMES MONTAGU.

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A WOMAN OF THIRTY-FIVE.

"MARION, I love you!"

There is a touch of intreaty in the ardent tones, something of eagerness in the boyish voice, a suggestion of the real fervour which is the accompaniment of a man's first passion for a woman.

She sat on a stile and smiled deprecatingly at the young man from whom this original observation issued.

She had heard the words so often from his lips that they failed to touch her imagination afresh. They called for no comment. It was not the fact but the position created thereby which concerned her most. His voice for the moment seemed to come from a distance. In a desultory sort of way she was thinking of many things. The thought which came uppermost was perhaps the most trivial, and therefore claimed immediate attention. It occurred to her that at her age—she was thirty-five—sitting on a high stile even to an audience of one was not an attitude in which she appeared to advantage; she decided to get down.

"Rupert, give me your hand," she said.

"I was asking you to bestow yours upon me," he murmured, when she stood beside him.

"What a beautiful sunset!" she said inconsequently.

"Thank you, the solar system can wait. Marion, will you not promise to marry me?"

That was the very question she was asking herself. She found it hard to say "Yes," and more difficult to to say "No." She would try to temporise.

"Why not let things remain as they are, Rupert? We have been very happy."

"Marion, I want you to marry me, to feel sure of you. Give me your answer."

She had tried to keep their relations in the platonic stage, but he would have none of it. He was clearly a young man of some impetuosity. He was twenty-four, the son of a local solicitor, who had dallied with the law, and then given it up for painting. His friends predicted that he would do great things. It is the sort of remark which may be said of any young man of that age. If you are twenty-four and have good health everything is possible. Rupert Barrett had not yet found himself out. He felt sure that he loved Marion Cross. It was the one thing of which this rather nice boy with the affectionate brown eyes was certain.

"Rupert, I cannot marry you."

Marion Cross was not wholly unsophisticated. The only daughter of a country banker of the old-fashioned type, everybody knew and liked her. Rupert was the first man who had told her that she was loved. She was thirty-five, remember. Not old for her age by any means. Tall and slim, she had the fair hair and complexion, and the blue eyes which will carry a woman from youth into the confines of middle age, and still leave some of the fragrance of youth with her. She had not lost all her illusions. But she knew that to marry a man ten years her junior would be an unpardonable sin.

"No, Rupert," she said, "I will not marry you, and I will tell you why. You think you love me——"

"Marion, how can you be so cruel?"

"I am not cruel. I mean to be kind to you."

"Be a little more kin to me and a little less kind."

"Rupert, I am ten years older than you."

"Is that all. I thought you were going to say something new. You were ten years older two years ago. You will always be ten years older."

"That is just it, Rupert. I shall always be," she said sadly. "I shall become an old woman while you are still a young man."

It was a hard thing for a woman to confess, but she did it. She must have loved him dearly.

"Besides, you have your career to think of. You ought not to think of marrying for years. Go and make a name for yourself."

"Let me share my name with you?" he pleaded; "with you for my wife I feel that I could indeed do something that would make you proud of me. Say that you will. You know how much I love you. And you do care a little for me, Marion?"

"Yes, yes; and it is——"

"Then you do love me, Marion? And you will be my wife?"

"Don't ask me."

"But I will," he urged. "I don't understand you, Marion. One moment you admit that you care for me, and yet you refuse to marry me. I cannot understand."

"I would not try dear, if I were you. You know women are supposed to be an enigma."

"Do not trifle with me," pleaded the boy's voice. "You cannot love me!"

"Indeed," she cried, "I love you better than you know!"

And she allowed him to take her in his arms. Poor Marion! She smiled bravely, and sent him home happy when they parted, but she was rather tempted to despise herself.

Rupert's happiness was very short lived. For a whole week he really imagined that Marion Cross would become his wife. For the same period she had a fear that she might be tempted to do this thing.

Then Rupert read a little paragraph in the *Willington Gazette*.

"Much interest has been occasioned by the announcement that a marriage has been arranged between the Rev. Ambrose Godley and Miss Cross, the daughter of our old and esteemed resident, Mr. Montagu Cross."

When he read this Rupert felt that the sun had suddenly grown cold and dead.

He could not credit such duplicity on the part of the woman he had loved.

The news was true, however. His father referred to it at dinner that evening.

"Have you heard the news, Rupert?" he said casually. "The Vicar is going to marry Marion Cross."

Rupert's mother had died years ago, and the father and son had never quite understood each other. Mr. Barratt, senior, in his professional capacity, was the repository of many secrets, but he had never won his son's confidence. He had some suspicion as to the state of affairs between Rupert and Marion Cross, but they had never spoken on the subject.

"I am glad," he thought, "that that nonsense is put an end to."

In his own mind he had little doubt that this middle-aged spinster had kept his son's mind unsettled. He regretted that Rupert had not taken kindly to the law, but he now resolved that Rupert should go to London and work out his own destiny.

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The next day Rupert received the following letter:

"MY DEAR RUPERT,—

"You will have heard the news that I am about to marry the vicar, and are no doubt thinking hard things of me. I should like to see you once more. Will you meet me at the old place on Thursday afternoon?

"Your affectionate friend, MARION CROSS."

Rupert, who thought that the world ought to cease to rotate on its axis, was in no mood to forgive Marion Cross the part she had played in wrecking his happiness. He decided that he would not see her again, but would write. After composing and destroying quite a dozen letters, he managed to arrive at the following:—

"MY DEAR MARION,—

"I was one of the last persons to hear of your good fortune. But if my congratulations are tardy they are none the less sincere. I do not see that any good can come of our meeting again. With the fervent hope that your career of duplicity is now at an end, and wishing you all the happiness you deserve,

"I am, yours affectionately.

"RUPERT BARRETT."

The satisfaction with which the writer regarded this letter was some balm to his outraged feelings. Poor Marion was distressed when she received it. She had acted for what she thought were the best interests of this young man. She was fearful that she might succumb to the temptation to marry him, and when the Vicar, who was a widower of forty-five, asked her to be his wife she clutched at the opportunity with the spirit of despair.

She could not say she had any affection for the Vicar, but she respected him. She had been in grave danger of ceasing to respect herself. So Marion Cross married a man who had a nicely adjusted affection for her, and who felt the social need of a wife, for he was a man who had distinct chances of preferment. He was a high churchman at a time when that party was beginning to to be paramount in the Church of England, and he had a natural gift of oratory which he had assiduously cultivated. With good luck and no inconvenient scruples, he might yet wear the mitre.

A week before the marriage Rupert took his departure for London with the professed purpose of studying painting and the arts.

It must be confessed that what Rupert lacked was ballast. He wrote to his father regularly; dutiful letters, in which he said very little about himself. At the studios he gave the impression of having ability but little application. He soon began to drift instead of living with a purpose. Then one day came a letter to Mr. Barrett, senior, that Rupert had been rash enough to marry without consulting his father, and that he was bringing his wife home.

Rupert will never forget the evening they arrived. Neither will his father. Rupert's wife was the only person who was happy—sublimely, ignorantly happy.

Mr. Barrett saw seated opposite him a young woman of rather florid appearance and with obviously dyed golden hair. He put her age down at twenty-seven, and she was already slightly *passé*.

"You know I used to sit for Rupert," she said, in one of her early attempts at conversation during dinner.

"Sit for him!" exclaimed the old gentleman, realising for the first time that this aggressive young person had been a painters' model.

Both Rupert and his father were glad when the meal had come to an end.

There were awful silences between the trio, and still more dreadful moments of confidence on the part of the young bride. She had a terrible intrepidity of talk. When the fish was served, Mr. Barrett was merely of opinion that his son had married an empty-headed creature; by the time dinner was at an end he realised that she was simply impossible.

Presently the two men were alone.

"Rupert," said his father gravely, "perhaps you will now tell me why you have presumed to marry without my consent. You have no means whereby to support a wife."

"Father, I know all that you feel. I have been an awful fool. Forgive me!"

"Never!" said the old man bitterly. "But I have decided what I will do. Your allowance of £200 a year will be continued, and I trust when this visit is at an end I shall see but little of you and the woman you have made your wife."

Rupert said no more. He knew his father to be a stern man, and he was too ashamed of his own folly to attempt to offer any excuses.

Things were so strained in his father's house that Rupert spent much of his time out of doors alone. On the third day after his return he met Marion on the high road outside the town. She stopped to speak to him.

"I must congratulate you, Rupert, on your marriage, and I hope I shall have the pleasure of meeting your wife."

"Marion," said Rupert, his old love for her surging up again at this meeting, "why did you treat me so badly?"

"You must not talk of that. You have got to be very happy with your wife."

"Happy! Oh Heaven!" he broke in bitterly. "I am the most miserable thing on earth. Marion, if you had only married me!"

If she only had. How often latterly had the thought come to Marion herself. Six months of married life had sufficed to find the Vicar out. The Reverend Ambrose Godley passed in the world as a man of high aims and true religion. Marion had come to know that his life was a sham, that he disbelieved the things he preached, and that the mainspring of his character was insincerity. His one idea was self-advancement; he was an opportunist of the meanest type. Marion had never pretended to love him. Now she had ceased to respect him.

"Rupert," she said finally, "good-bye. What is past is past. Blame me if you will; I acted for the best, but I have lately thought that I ought indeed to have married you."

"Then you did care for me, Marion?"

"Rupert, I shall always love you."

"Then it is not too late!" he cried eagerly. "Let us go——"

"And add sin to folly. No dear. It is too late! We must live our lives. Whatever might have been, your wife and my husband stand between us now."

* * * * *

The Reverend Ambrose Godley realised his ambition and became a Bishop; Marion threw herself into the social duties of her position, and in time came to pity her husband. She was denied the consolation of motherhood. Rupert paints pot-boilers, has four untidy children, and a wife who is said to drink.

HENRY A. SLACK.

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THE LOVERS OF YVONNE

By RAFAEL SABATINI.

SUMMARY.

ANDREA DE MANCINI, a nephew of Cardinal Mazarin, is found one day by the latter in the Palais Royal, Paris, in a state of intoxication. Gaston de Luynes, the narrator of this story, and fencing-master to de Mancini, is blamed by the Cardinal for allowing his nephew to get into such a condition, and is removed from his position of fencing-master.

Eugène de Canaples insults de Mancini and a duel is arranged, but the Cardinal hears of it and tells de Luynes that it must not take place. De Luynes realises that if he does not prevent it the Cardinal has power to do him great harm, and accordingly raises a quarrel with de Canaples which ends in a fight, de Canaples being severely wounded. The onlookers are enraged with de Luynes because he indiscreetly lets fall the fact that he raised this quarrel so as to prevent a duel between de Mancini and de Canaples, and he has to flee for his life. To escape his pursuers he springs on the step of a passing carriage, and the ladies inside let him shelter there for a time, but when he says that he has wounded de Canaples they order him to alight.

De Luynes then accompanies de Mancini to the home of Eugène de Canaples, whose sister, Yvonne, Cardinal Mazarin wishes de Mancini to marry. The Chevalier de Canaples receives de Luynes and de Mancini very cordially at his château. Yvonne, however, is not at all gracious to de Luynes, because she knows of the duel which he fought with her brother, as she and her sister Geneviève were the two ladies who befriended him. De Mancini falls in love with Geneviève.

De Luynes does not stay at the Château de Canaples, but at an inn in Blois, the *Lys de France*. One morning he is visited there by the Marquis de St. Auban, who himself wants to marry Yvonne—for her money. After insulting each other a duel is arranged for the following morning, but the time is afterwards altered to the evening of the day of the insult. St. Auban tells de Luynes that Cardinal Mazarin has issued a warrant for his arrest.

As de Luynes is riding to Canaples after his encounter with St. Auban, he is met by Malpertuis, an officer who had been in the train of St. Auban, and by him he is told that a plot is on foot to kidnap Yvonne. De Luynes warns the lady, but she takes no heed and falls into the trap set for her. De Luynes starts out to her assistance, and succeeds in effecting a rescue after a severe struggle.

While returning with Yvonne to Canaples the carriage is stopped and de Luynes arrested by M. de Montrésor on a warrant from Cardinal Mazarin.

CHAPTER XIV.

Of what Befel at Reaux.

AT my captor's bidding I mounted the horse which they had untethered from the carriage, and we started off along the road which the coach itself had disappeared upon a moment before. But we travelled at a gentle trot which after that evening's furious riding was welcome to me.

With bitterness I reflected, as I rode, that the very moment at which Mademoiselle de Canaples had brought herself to think better of me was like to prove the last we should spend together. Yet not altogether bitter was that reflection; for with it came also the consolation, whereof I had told her, that I had not been taken before she had had cause to change her mind concerning me.

That she should care for me was too preposterous an idea to be nourished, and indeed it was better—much better—that M. de Montrésor had come before, grown sanguine, as lovers will, I had again earned her scorn by showing her what my heart contained. Much better was it that I should pass forever out of her life—as indeed methought I was like to pass out of all life—whilst I could leave in her mind a kind remembrance and a grateful regret free from the stain that a subsequent possible presumption of mine might have cast o'er it.

Then my thoughts shifted to Andrea. St. Auban would hear of my removal, and I cared not to think of what profit he might derive from it. To Yvonne also his presence must hereafter be a menace, and in that wherein to-night he had failed, he might, again, succeed. It was at this juncture of my reverie that M. de Montrésor's pleasant young voice aroused me.

"You appear downcast, M. de Luynes."

"I downcast!" I echoed, throwing back my head, and laughing. "Nay, I was but thinking."

"Believe me, M. de Luynes," he said kindly, "when I tell you that it grieves me to be charged with this matter. I have done my best to capture you; that was my duty. But I should have rejoiced had I failed, with the consciousness of having done all in my power."

"Thanks, Montrésor," I murmured, and silence followed.

"I have been thinking, Monsieur," he went on presently, "that possibly the absence of your sword causes you discomfort."

"Eh? Discomfort? It does, right truly!"

"Give me your word of honour that you will attempt no escape, and not only shall your sword be returned to you, but you shall travel to Paris with all comfort and dignity."

Now so amazed was I, that I paused to stare at the officer who was young enough to make such a proposal to a man of my reputation. He turned his face towards me, and in the moonlight I could make out his questioning glance.

"Well, Monsieur?"

"I am more than grateful to you, M. de Montrésor," I replied, "and I freely give you my word of honour to seek no means of eluding you, nor to avail myself of any that may be presented to me."

I said this loud enough for those behind to hear, so that no surprise was evinced when the lieutenant bade the man who bore my sword return it to me.

If he who may chance to read these simple pages shall have gathered aught of my character from their perusal, he will marvel perchance that I should give the lieutenant my word of honour, instead rather of watching for an opportunity to at least attempt an escape. Preeminent in my thoughts, however, stood at that moment the necessity to remove St. Auban, and methought that by acting as I did, I saw a way by which haply I might accomplish this. What might thereafter befall me seemed of little moment.

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"M. de Montrésor," I said presently, "your kindness impels me to set a further tax upon your generosity."

"That is, Monsieur?"

"Bid your men fall back a little, and I will tell you."

He made a sign to his troopers, and when the distance between us had been sufficiently widened, I began:

"There is a man at present across the river yonder who has done me no little injury, and with him I have an appointment at nine o'clock to-night at St. Sulpice des Reaux, where our swords are to determine the difference between us. I crave, Monsieur, your permission to keep that appointment."

"Impossible," he answered curtly.

I took a deep breath, like a man who is about to jump an obstacle in his path.

"Why impossible, Monsieur?"

"Because you are a prisoner, and therefore no longer under obligation to keep appointments."

"How would you feel, Montrésor, if burning to be avenged upon a man who had done you irreparable wrong, you were arrested an hour before the time at which you were to meet this man, sword in hand, and your captor—whose leave you craved to keep the assignation—answered you with the word 'impossible'?"

"Yes, yes, Monsieur," he replied impatiently. "But you forget my position. Let us suppose that I allow you to go to St. Sulpice des Reaux! What if you do not return?"

"You mistrust me?" I exclaimed, my hopes melting.

"You misapprehend me. I mean, what if you are killed?"

"I do not think that I shall be?."

"Ah! But what if you are What shall I say to my Lord Cardinal?"

"Oh, tell him that I am dead, and that he is saved the trouble of hanging me. The most he can want of me is my life. Let us suppose that you had come an hour later. You would have been forced to wait until after the encounter, and did I fall, matters would be no different."

The young man fell to thinking, but I, knowing that it is not well to let the young ponder overlong if you would bend them to your wishes, broke in upon his reflections.

"Yes, Montrésor, yonder are the lights of Blois; by eight o'clock we shall be in the town. Come, grant me leave to cross the Loire, and by ten o'clock, or half-past at the latest, I shall return to sup with you, or I shall be dead. I swear it."

"Were I in your position," he answered musingly, "I know how I would be treated, and, by Heaven, come what may, I shall deal with you accordingly. You may go to your assignation, M. de Luynes, and may God prosper you!"

And thus it came to pass that shortly after eight o'clock, albeit a prisoner, I rode into the courtyard of the *Lys de France*, and alighting, I stepped across the threshold of the inn, and strode up to a table at which I had espied Michelot. He sat nursing a huge measure of wine, into the depths of which he was gazing pensively, with an expression so glum upon his weatherbeaten countenance that it defies depiction. So deep was he in his meditations, that albeit I stood by the table surveying him for a full minute, he took no heed of me.

"Come, Michelot!" I said at length. "Wake up."

He started up with a cry of amazement; surprise chased away the grief that had been on his face, and a moment later joy unfeigned and good to see took the place of surprise.

"You have escaped, Monsieur!" he cried and albeit caution made him utter the words beneath his breath, a shout seemed to lurk somewhere in the whisper.

Pressing his hand, I sat down and briefly told him how matters stood, and how I came to be for the moment free. And when I had done I bade him, since his wound had not proved serious, to get his hat and cloak and go with me to find a boat.

He obeyed me and a quarter of an hour after we had quitted the hostelry he was rowing me across the stream, whilst wrapped in my cloak I sat in the stern, thinking of Yvonne.

"Monsieur," said Michelot, "observe how swift is the stream. If I were to let the boat drift we should be at Tours to-morrow, and from there it would be easy to defy pursuit. We have enough money to reach Spain. What say you, Monsieur?"

"Say, you rascal? Why, bend your back to the work, and set me ashore by St. Sulpice in a quarter of an hour, or I'll forget that you have been my friend. Would you see me dishonoured?"

"Sooner than see you dead," he grumbled, as he resumed his task. Thereafter, whilst he rowed, Michelot entertained me with some quaint ideas touching that which fine gentlemen call honour, and to what sorry passes it was wont to bring them, concluding by thanking God that he was no gentleman and had no honour to lead him into mischief.

At last, howbeit, our journey came to an end, and I sprang ashore at some five hundred paces from the little chapel, and almost exactly opposite the Château de Canaples. I stood for a moment gazing across the water at the lighted windows of the Château, wondering which of those eyes that looked out upon the night might be that of Yvonne's chamber.

Then, bidding Michelot await me, or follow did I not return in half-an-hour, I turned and moved away towards the chapel.

There is a clearing in front of the little white edifice which, rather than a temple, is but a monument to the martyr who is said to have perished on that spot in the days before Clovis. As I advanced into the centre of this open patch of ground, and stood clear of the black silhouettes of the trees, cast about me by the moon, two men appeared to detach themselves from the side wall of the chapel and advanced to meet me.

Albeit they were wrapped in their cloaks, up-tilted behind by their protruding scabbards, it was not difficult to tell the tall figure and stately bearing of St. Auban and the mincing gait of Vilmorin.

I doffed my hat in a grave salutation, which was courteously returned.

"I trust, Messieurs, that I have not kept you waiting?"

"I was on the point of expressing that very hope, Monsieur," returned St. Auban. "We have but arrived. Do you come alone?"

"As you perceive."

"Hum! M. le Vicomte then will act for both of us."

I bowed in token of my satisfaction, and without more ado cast aside my cloak, pleased to see that the affair was to be conducted with decency and politeness, as such matters should ever be conducted, albeit that impoliteness may have marked their origin.

The Marquis having followed my example, and divested himself of his cloak and hat, unsheathed his rapier and delivered it to Vilmorin, who came across with it to where I stood. When he was close to me, I saw that he was deadly pale, his teeth chattered, and the hand that held the weapon shook as with the palsy.

"M-Monsieur," he stammered, "will it please you to lend me your sword, that I m-measure it?"

"What formalities!" I exclaimed, with an amused smile as I complied with his request. "I am afraid you have caught a chill, Vicomte. The night air is little suited to health so delicate."

He answered me with a baleful glance, as silently he took my sword and set it, point to hilt, with St. Auban's. He appeared to have found some slight difference in the length, for he took two steps away from me, holding the weapons well in the light, where for a moment he surveyed them attentively. His hand shook so, that the blades clattered one against the other the while. But, of a sudden, taking both rapiers by the hilt, he struck the blades together with a ringing clash, then flung them both behind him as far as he could contrive, leaving me thunderstruck with amazement and marvelling whether fear had robbed him of his wits.

Not until I perceived that the trees around me appeared to spring into life did it occur to me that the clashing of blades was a signal, and that I was trapped. With the realisation of it I was upon Vilmorin in a bound, and with both hands I had caught the dog by the throat before he thought of flight. The violence of my onslaught bore him to the ground, and I, not to release my choking grip, went with him.

For a moment we lay together where we had fallen, his

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slender body twisting and writhing under me, his swelling face upturned, and his protruding eyes horror-stricken gazing into mine, that were fierce and pitiless. Voices rang above me; some one stooped and strove to pluck me from my victim; then below the left shoulder I felt a sting of pain, first cold then hot, and I know that I had been stabbed. Again I felt the blade thrust in, lower down and driven deeper; then as the knife was for the second time withdrawn, and my flesh sucked at the steel, the pain of it sent a shudder through me, the instinct of preservation overcame the sweet lust to strangle Vilmorin. I let him go, and staggering to my feet, I turned to face those murderers who struck a defenceless man behind.

Swords gleamed around me; one, two, three, four, five, six I counted, and stood weak and dazed from loss of blood, gazing stupidly at the white blades. Had I but had my sword I should have laid about me, and gone down beneath their blows as befits a soldier. But the absence of that trusty friend left me limp and helpless, cowed for the first time since I had borne arms.

Of a sudden I became aware that St. Auban stood opposite me, hand on hip, surveying me with a malicious leer. As our eyes met, "So, master meddler," quoth he mockingly, "you crow less lustily than is your wont."

My arms were gripped from behind, and in my spent condition I was held there powerless at the Marquis' mercy.

"Hound!" I gasped, choking with rage. "If you are a man—if there be a spark of pride or honour left in your lying, cowardly soul, order your assassins to give me my sword, and wounded though I be, I'll fight with you this duel that you lured me here to fight."

He laughed harshly.

"I told you but this morning, Master de Luynes, that a St. Auban does not fight a man of your stamp. You forced this affair upon me; you shall reap the consequences."

Despite the weakness arising from loss of blood, I sprang towards him, beside my self with fury. But ere I had covered half the distance that lay betwixt us, my arms were gripped from behind, and in my spent condition I was held there, powerless, at the Marquis' mercy. He came slowly forward until we were but some two feet apart. For a second he stood leering at me, then raising his hand, he struck me—struck a man whose arms another held—full upon the face. Passion for the moment lent me strength, and in that moment I had wrenched my right arm free and returned his blow with interest.

With an oath he got out a dagger that hung from his baldrick.

"Take that, you dog!" he snarled, burying the blade in my breast as he spoke.

"Oh, Heaven! You are murdering me!" I gasped.

"Have you discovered it? What penetration!" he retorted, and those about him laughed at his indecent jest.

He made a sign, and the man who had held me withdrew his hands. I staggered forward, deprived of his support, then a crashing blow took me across the head.

I swayed for an instant, and with arms upheld I clutched at the air, as if I sought, by hanging to it, to save myself from falling; then the moon appeared to go dark, a noise as of the sea beating upon its shore filled my ears, and I seemed to be falling, falling, falling.

A voice that buzzed and vibrated oddly, growing more distant at each word, reached me as I sank. "Come," it said, "fling that carrion into the river."

Then nothingness engulfed me.

CHAPTER XV.

Of My Resurrection.

EVEN as the blow which had plunged me into senselessness had imparted to me the sinking sensation which I have feebly endeavoured to depict, so did the first dim ray of returning consciousness bring with it the feeling that I was again being buoyed upwards through the thick waters that had enveloped me, to their surface, where intelligence and wakefulness awaited.

And as I felt myself borne up and up in that effortless ascension—my senses awake and my reason half-dormant—an exquisite sense of langour pervaded my whole being. Presently methought that the surface was gained at last, and an instinct impelled me to open my eyes upon the light, of which through closed lids I had become conscious.

I beheld a fair-sized room superbly furnished, and flooded with amber sunlight, suggestive in itself of warmth and luxury, and the vision of which heightened the delicious torpor that held me in thrall. The bed I lay upon was such, I told myself, as would not have disgraced a royal sleeper. It was upheld by great pillars of black oak, carved with a score of fantastic figures, and all around it, descending from the dome above, hung curtains of rich damask, drawn back at the side that looked upon the window. Near at hand stood a table laden with vials and such utensils as one sees by the bedside of the

wealthy sick. All this I beheld in a languid, unreasoning fashion through my half-open lids, and albeit the luxury of the room and the fine linen of my bed told me that this was neither my Paris lodging in the Rue St. Antoine, nor yet my chamber at the hostelry of the *Lys de France*, still I taxed not my brain with any questions touching my whereabouts.

I closed me eyes, and I must have slept again, for when next I opened them a burly figure stood in the deep bay of the latticed window, looking out through the leaded panes. I recognised the stalwart frame of Michelot, and at last I asked myself where I might be. It did not occur to me that I had but to call him to receive an answer to that question. Instead, I closed my eyes again, and essayed to think. But just then there came a gentle scratching at the door, and I could hear Michelot tiptoeing across the room; next he and the one he had admitted tip-toed back towards my bedside, and as they came I caught a whisper in a voice that seemed to drag me to full consciousness.

"How fares the poor invalid this morning?"

"The fever is gone, Mademoiselle, and he may wake at any moment, indeed, it is strange that he should sleep so long."

"He will be the better for it when he does awaken. I will remain here while you rest, Michelot. My poor fellow, you are almost as worn out with your vigils as he is with the fever."

"Pooh, I am strong enough, Mademoiselle," he answered. "I will get a mouthful of food, and return, for I would be by when he wakes."

Then their voices sank so low that as they withdrew I caught not what was said. The door closed softly, and for a space there was silence, broken at last by a sigh above my head. With an answering sigh I opened wide my eyes, and feasted them upon the lovely face of Yvonne de Canaples, as she bent over me with a look of tenderness and pity that at once recalled to me our parting when I was arrested.

But suddenly meeting the stare of my gaze, she drew back with a half-stifled cry, whose meaning my dull wits sought not to interpret; but methought I caught from her lips the words, "Thank God!"

"Where am I, Mademoiselle?" I inquired, and the faintness of my voice amazed me.

"You know me!" she exclaimed, as though the thing were a miracle. Then coming forward again, and setting her cool, sweet hand upon my forehead, "Hush," she murmured, in the accents one might use to soothe a child. "You are at Canaples, among friends. Now sleep."

"At Canaples!" I echoed. "How came I here? I am a prisoner, am I not?"

"A prisoner!" she exclaimed. "No, no, you are not a prisoner. You are among friends."

"Did I then but dream that Montrésor arrested me yesterday on the road to Meung? Ah! I recollect! M. de Montrésor gave me leave on my word of honour to go to Reaux."

Then, like an avalanche, remembrance swept down upon me, and my memory drew a vivid picture of the happenings at St. Sulpice.

"Good Heavens!" I cried. "Am I not dead, then?" And I sought to struggle up into a sitting posture, but that gentle hand upon my forehead restrained, and robbed me of all will that was not hers.

"Hush, Monsieur," she said softly. "Lie still. By a miracle and the faithfulness of Michelot you live. Be thankful, be content, and sleep."

"But my wounds, Mademoiselle?" I inquired feebly.

"They are healed."

"Healed?" quoth I, and in my amazement my voice sounded louder than it had yet done since my awakening. "Healed? Three such wounds as I took last night, to say naught of a broken head, healed?"

"'Twas not last night, Monsieur."

"Not last night? Was it not last night that I went to Reaux?"

"It is nearly a month since that took place," she answered, with a smile. "For nearly a month have you lain unconscious upon that bed, with the angel of Death at your pillow. You have fought and won a silent battle. Now sleep, Monsieur, and ask no more questions until next you awaken, when Michelot shall tell you all that took place."

She held a glass to my lips, from which I drank gratefully, then, with the submissiveness of a babe, I obeyed her and slept.

As she had promised, it was Michelot who greeted me when next I opened my eyes, on the following day. There were tears in his eyes—eyes that had looked grim and unmoved upon the horrors of the battle-field.

From him I learnt how, after they had flung me into the river, deeming me dead already, St. Auban and his men had made off. The swift stream swirled me along towards the spot where, in the boat, Michelot awaited my return, all unconscious of what was taking place. He had heard the splash, and had suddenly stood up, on the point of going ashore, when my body rose within a few feet of him. He spoke of the agony of mind wherewith he had suddenly stretched forth and clutched me by my doublet, fearing that I was indeed dead. He had lifted me into the boat to find that my heart still beat, and that the blood flowed from my wounds. These he had there and then bound up in the only rude fashion he was master of, and forthwith, thinking of Andrea and the Chevalier de Canaples, who were my friends, and of Mademoiselle who was my debtor, also seeing that the Château was the nearest place, he had rowed straight across to Canaples, and there I had lain during the four weeks that had elapsed, nursed by Mademoiselle, Andrea, and himself, and thus won back to life.

Ah, Heaven! How good it was to know that some one there was still who cared for worthless Gaston de Luynes a little—enough to watch beside him and withhold his soul from the grim claws of Death.

"What of M. de St. Auban?" I inquired presently.

"He has not been seen since that night. Probably he feared that did he come to Blois, the Chevalier would find means of punishing him for the attempted abduction of Mademoiselle."

"Ah, then Andrea is safe?"

As if in answer to my question, the lad entered at that moment, and upon seeing me sitting up, talking to Michelot, he uttered an exclamation of joy, and hurried forward to my bedside.

"Gaston, dear friend!" he cried, as he took my hand—and a thin withered hand it was.

We talked long together, we three, and anon we were joined by the Chevalier de Canaples, who offered me also, in his hesitating manner, his felicitations. And with me they lingered until Yvonne came to drive them with protestations from my bedside.

Such, in brief, was the manner of my resurrection. For a week or so I still kept my chamber; then, one day, towards the middle of April, the weather being warm and the sun bright, Michelot assisted me to don my clothes, which hung strangely empty upon my gaunt, emaciated frame, and leaning heavily upon my faithful henchman, I made my way below.

In the *salon* I found the Chevalier de Canaples with Mesdemoiselles and Andrea awaiting me, and the kindness wherewith they overwhelmed me as I sat propped up with pillows was such that I asked myself again and again if indeed I was that same Gaston de Luynes who, but a little while ago, had held himself as destitute of friends as he was of fortune. I was the pampered hero of the hour, and even little Geneviève had a sunny smile and a kind word for me.

Thereafter my recovery progressed with great strides, and gradually, day by day, I felt more like my vigorous old self. They were happy days, for Mademoiselle was often at my side, and ever kind to me; so kind was she, that presently, as my strength grew, there fell a great cloud athwart my happiness—the thought that soon I must leave Canaples, never to return there; leave Mademoiselle's presence, never to come into it again.

I was Monsieur de Montrésor's prisoner. I had learnt that in common with all others, save those at Canaples, he deemed me dead, and that, informed of it by a message from St.

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Auban, he had returned to Paris on the day following that of my journey to Reaux. Nevertheless, since I lived, he had my word of honour, and it was my duty, so soon as I had regained sufficient strength, to journey to Paris, and deliver myself into his hands.

On the last day of April I essayed a fencing bout with Andrea, and so strong and supple did I prove myself that I was forced to realise that the time was come.

As I was on the point of returning indoors, with the foils under my arm, Andrea called me back.

"Gaston, I have something of importance to say to you. Will you take a turn with me down yonder by the river."

There was a serious, almost nervous look on his comely face, which arrested my attention. I dropped the foils, and taking his arm, I went with him as he bid me. We seated ourselves on the grass, by the edge of the gurgling waters, and he began:

"It is now two months since we came to Blois—I to pay my court to the wealthy Mademoiselle de Canaples; you to watch over and protect me—nay, you need not interrupt me. Michelot has told me what St. Auban sought here, and the true motives of your journey to St. Sulpice. Never shall I be able to sufficiently prove my gratitude to you, my poor Gaston. But tell me, dear friend, you who from the outset saw how matters stood, why did you not inform St. Auban that he had no cause to hunt me down since I intended not to come betwixt him and Yvonne?"

"Merciful Heavens!" I exclaimed, "that little fair-haired coquette has——"

"Gaston," he interrupted, "You go too fast. I love Geneviève de Canaples. I have loved her, I think, since the moment I beheld her in the inn at Choisy, and what is more, she loves me."

"So that?" I asked with an ill-repressed sneer.

"We have plighted our troth, and with her father's sanction, or without it, she will do me the honour to become my wife."

"Admirable!" I exclaimed. "And my Lord Cardinal?"

"May hang himself on his stole for aught I care."

"Ah! Truly a dutiful expression for a nephew who has thwarted his uncle's plans."

"My uncle's plans are like himself, cold and selfish in their ambition."

"Andrea, Andrea! Whatever your uncle may be, to those of your blood, at least, he was never selfish."

"Not selfish!" he cried. "Think you that he is enriching and contracting great alliances for us because he loves us? No, no, our uncle seeks to gain our support, and with it the support of those noble houses to which he is allying us. The nobility opposes him, therefore he seeks to find relatives among noblemen, so that he may weather the storm of which his far-seeing eyes have already detected the first dim clouds. What to him are my feelings, my inclinations, my affections? Things of no moment, to be sacrificed so that I may serve him in the manner that will bring him the most profit. Yet you call him not selfish! Were he not selfish I should go to him and say, 'I love Geneviève de Canaples. Create me Duke, as you would do did I wed her sister, and the Chevalier de Canaples will not withstand our union.' What think you would be his answer?"

"I have a shrewd idea what his answer would be," I replied slowly. "Also I have a shrewd idea of what he will say when he learns in what manner you have defied his wishes."

"He can but order me away from Court, or, at most, banish me from France."

"And then what will become of you—of you and your wife?"

"What is to become of us," he cried, in a tone that was almost of anger. "Think you that I am a pauper dependent upon my uncle's bounty? I have an estate near Palermo, which for all that it does not yield riches, is yet sufficient to enable us to live with dignity and comfort."

"Well, well," said I. "If you are resolved upon it, it is ended."

He appeared to meditate for a moment, then:

"We have decided to be married by the Curé of St. Innocent on the day after to-morrow."

"My faith!" I answered, with a whistle, "you have wasted no time in determining your plans. Does Yvonne know of it?"

"We have dared tell nobody," he replied, and a moment later he added, hesitatingly, "you, I know, will not betray us."

"Do you know me so little that you doubt me on that score? Have no fear, Andrea, I shall not speak. Besides, to-morrow or the next day at latest, I leave Canaples."

"You do not mean that you are returning to the *Lys de France?*"

"No. I am going farther than that. I am going to Paris.

"To Paris?"

"To Paris, to deliver myself up to M. de Montrésor, who gave me leave to go to Reaux some seven weeks ago."

"But it is madness, Gaston!" he ejaculated.

"All virtue is madness in a world so sinful; nevertheless, I go. In a measure I am glad that things have fallen out with you as they have done; for when the news goes abroad that you have married Geneviève de Canaples, and left the heiress free, your enemies will vanish, and you will have no further need of me."

He sat in silence, casting pebbles into the stream, and

"Now sleep, Monsieur, and ask no more questions until next you awaken."

watching the ripples they made upon the surface of the waters.

"Have you told Mademoiselle?" he asked at length.

"Not yet. I shall tell her to-day. You also, Andrea, must take her into your confidence touching your approaching marriage. That she will prove a good friend to you, I am assured."

"But what reason shall I give for my secrecy?" he inquired.

"Give no reason," I answered. "Let Geneviève tell her of what you contemplate, and if a reason she must have, let Geneviève bid her come to me. This much will I do for you in the matter; indeed, Andrea, it is the last service I am like to render you."

"Sh! Here comes the Chevalier. She shall be told to-day."

(To be continued.)

Mr. Wilson's Experiences as a Tree Trimmer.

"WHAT are you going to do with that saw, Henry?" asked Mrs. Wilson of her husband, who was walking round the yard looking up at the top of the trees and whistling.

"Well, Mrs. Wilson, I am thinking seriously of trimming these trees," he replied, as he slapped his leg with the saw, and, turning his head to one side, he gazed steadfastly at the top of a tree, at the same time gleefully raising the tone of his whistle a few notes higher.

"You will do wonders, trimming trees. How will you get up there?" she sneeringly observed.

"Madam, I am no boy to shin up there, and not being endowed with wings, I expect to use an ordinary ladder," he meditatively replied.

"You will break your neck—that is what you will do," she asserted.

"Madam, it's my neck, my tree, my ladder, and my climb. If I kill myself it will not cost you anything. All I ask of you is to go into the house and stay there. When I want any of your advice I will call on you for it," he loftily remarked.

"You are altogether too high-flown, Mr. Wilson. You may want some assistance before you finish this job. If you do you need not call on me for it," and the door slammed as she went into the house.

In a few minutes she came out and looked up at Wilson, who had just got himself into position and was sawing off a limb.

"Henry Wilson, do you know that you are standing with one foot on the piece that will drop to the ground? You will break your neck. Stop sawing this instant," she commanded.

"Mrs. Wilson, who is doing this sawing?" he asked, straightening up and giving his wife a withering look.

As he turned to resume his work the limb broke off with a crash. He caught a branch, and hung dangling, his feet about ten feet from the ground.

"Just as I expected," she cried, as she ran to the tree. "Shall I get a quilt for you to fall on, Henry?"

"No! Get a sheet of paper; or perhaps you might catch me in your apron," he sarcastically rejoined.

"If I had a clothes-prop I might push you over, so that you could reach the ladder. What will you do?" she inquired.

"Do you suppose I am going to hang here like a smoked ham, and let you punch me with a clothes-prop? If you were capable of making two moves in half a day, you might get the ladder round here in time for me to eat breakfast to-morrow morning!" he yelled.

"Hold on, Henry! I will think of something."

"Mrs. Wilson, are you going to do anything to help me down, or must I hang here till the wind changes, so that it will blow me over to the ladder? If you had stayed in the house and minded your own business, I would have been all right; but you cannot get along without interfering with someone. If you will bring the ladder round here, I will try to come down," he panted

"I ought to go straight into the house and leave you, as a punishment for trying to lay the blame of this on to me," she indignantly replied.

"Great Scott, woman! are you going to stand there all day and make remarks? I am no monkey to hold on to this limb for a week. Get that ladder round here quick or I shall be on the ground," he shrieked.

She grasped the ladder, and struggled to drag it to where he was. It was all she could do to end it up, and as she was trying to ease it down by his side it slipped from her hands and fell against him. There was a smothered groan, a struggle on his part, and down came Wilson and ladder in a heap on the grass.

"Murdered! At last I'm done for!" came in agonised tones from under the ladder.

"Are you hurt, Henry?" she anxiously inquired.

"Hurt? No! It does not hurt to be knocked off a five-storey house, and then have the house on you! Oh, no I am not hurt!" and he groaned as he poked his head out between the rounds of the ladder.

"Are either of your legs or arms broken?" she asked as she attempted to remove the ladder, but only succeeded in striking his head with one of the side pieces.

"That is right, madam! Pound me over the head. Get the axe and finish me! I might live long enough to tell my friends how I met my death, and have my slayer brought to the bar of justice. Finish your job, madam. There is no one present to witness the consummation of your work!" he roared.

"If I were not a good Christian I would leave your home before the sun went down to-night. It does not seem as if I could endure your cruel taunts another day. So there," she snapped.

"Oh, ho! You are a Christian, are you? I would never have dreamed it. Do Christians knock their husbands out of trees with ladders? If they do, then you are a Christian. Is it the aim of your species of Christians to always be on the alert to murder their husbands? If that is the case, then you are a shining light in the society," he said, as he kicked the ladder off from himself, causing it to fall on Mrs. Wilson's feet.

"Oh, mercy, my feet! Henry Wilson, you did that on purpose! You dare not strike me, and you took that cowardly way for revenge! I will go home to ma! I will never live another day with you," and she began to sob.

"Now, madam, if you feel better, I wish you would step to the house and bring me my crutch and the liniment bottle, and I will try to get indoors," he remarked.

"If you sit there until I wait on you it will be quite late in the evening. If your leg is well enough to kick a ladder on to my feet, it is well enough to wait on yourself," she said, as she limped to the house and he limped away to the barn.

F. D. C.

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THE GREAT SHAH SYNDICATE.

ITS OBJECT—ITS DOINGS—ITS END.

CHAPTER I.

Its Object.

"THEN that's settled!" said the lean man, otherwise Mortimer Fitchett.

"Settled? Yes!" replied the stout man, known in his world as "Captain" Montague. "We're only waiting for the third man of the firm."

"Well—I've found him!"

"Found him! Where?"

"He'll be here in five minutes." (The speaker looked at his watch.) "That's good enough."

"You're a clever one, Fitchett!" said the "Captain." "But where did you pick him up? and—who is he?"

"I've never seen him. As to who he is, Heaven only knows. I don't!"

"You've given our game away to a stranger!" blurted out the other, his face white with apprehension of the strictly self-preservative sort.

"Is Mort. Fitchett a dog that he should do this thing? No! Listen! You know Garraway—'Uncle' Ben—who we badly wanted for a third, but who wouldn't? Well, I met him two days ago in the 'Shamrock,' Jermyn Street."

"You didn't tell me."

"Didn't think it necessary. Garraway said that though he wasn't touching the thing himself, he knew a man—a safe man—who, if I liked, would, he thought, be willing to join the board."

"And you?"

"Well; I did like. 'Uncle' put me on the telephone, at Maiden Lane, in talk with this Lester Wylde (he's a Yank, by the way); and in less than ten minutes, by means of the 'code'—which shows he knows us—we came to terms; he finally agreeing to come here at noon sharp to—— Ah, here he is!"

There had been no audible footsteps on the stairs; no knocking at the room door; no self-announcement. Quietly, silently as a shadow, an uprightly-tall, hatchet-faced, well-dressed man opened the door and noiselessly shut it again.

Then, taking a seat at the table, he, without removing his hat, deliberately lit a cigar and blew a long dense cloud of tobacco-smoke.

"Time?"

He uttered this one word below his breath almost; a faint, and almost enigmatical smile playing about the corners of his firm, thin-lipped mouth.

"Mr. Wylde?" said Fitchett, interrogatively.

"Quite right!"

"Well, my name is Fitchett, and——"

"Your friend is Montague—I beg his pardon—'Captain' Montague."

"How do you know that?" queried Fitchett with suspicious quickness; while the "Captain"—who always played second to his lean acquaintance—regarded the visitor with uneasy bewilderment.

"Gentlemen," said Lester Wylde, "this is child's play. Both of you, I can assure you, are too well-known in *our* circle, to be unfamiliar by name and reputation to me. Please let us to business, for I have a matter of importance to attend to in an hour from now."

"Well, it's like this, Mr. Wylde," said Fitchett, "Ben Garraway has told us that you're a 'square' member, and one who would be likely to go in with us—with the 'Captain' and myself, that is—in a little thing we've got on here just now. All we want is a chap that knows a bit about the East, and can palaver with the natives of——"

"Persia, for instance; yes, I see."

"Persia! Who said Persia?"

"You did—or at least you were going to."

"The dickens!" muttered the "Captain" under his breath, and kicking Fitchett's foot under the table.

"Perhaps you know a little more, as you know so much?" said Fitchett.

"Perhaps I do. But it isn't at all wonderful that I do, seeing that 'Uncle' Ben gave me the outline of your scheme this morning."

"Ah! very good! Ha! ha!" laughed the "Captain"; but a keen observer would have certainly detected an air of disquietude about the gallant gentleman, spite his assumption of hilarity.

"Look here!" said Fitchett, smartly smiting the table with his open palm. "Whether you know it or not, I'll tell you what we propose doing, and leave it to you to join us or not, as you like."

"That's fair!" remarked Wylde.

"You've heard, then," said the lean man, "that the Shah of Persia is, financially, at present in a very bad way?"

"Yes, I've heard that."

"Well, it seems that money is so scarce with him that he's hard put to it to find the cash to buy even a new suit of clothes. Not a shopkeeper in Teheran will trust him; while, to make matters worse for him, his ministers not only keep him a prisoner in his own palace, but do all they can to incite the feelings of his subjects against him."

"Yes. All this is common talk at home and abroad; come to the cream of your ideas."

"It's this. The Shah has belonging to him, as head of the State, something approaching to thirty millions' worth or more of diamonds, and other precious stones and things. We know, the 'Captain' and I, from a Persian, who was lately in the Sailors' Home for Asiatics, but who is now dead, exactly where these jewels are kept, and how they might be transferred to our hands, and brought away to Europe."

"Ah! and what plan do you propose by which to effect this?"

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"This: We are for the time a Financial Syndicate, having for its object the helping of the Shah out of his pecuniary troubles. One of us—you, if you join us, as you are acquainted with that part of the world—journeys to Teheran, obtains audience of the Shah, and proffers the assistance of the Syndicate. Once inside the Palace, and on terms of intimacy with the monarch, we believe, with the knowledge I have referred to, that the thing could be done."

"—'m—perhaps it could. Up to the present, however, I fail to see what part you two gentlemen are to play in the matter?"

"Why," said Montague, a trifle irritably, "we find the money, and accompany you to India, waiting for you in the Ameer's capital."

"Then, as I understand it, you leave the details of the actual acquisition of the treasure to me. Is that so?"

"Well, yes in a way," said Fitchett. "Ben Garraway declares that there is no other man living who could better carry the thing through."

"Much obliged, I'm sure, to 'Uncle', and I shall certainly do my best to deserve his commendation. Now, as to terms, what do you offer?"

"A third of the profits," replied Fitchett. "The sum of two thousand pounds to be paid to you on leaving us at Calcutta, from which point you will journey alone to the Persian capital. This sum will be for travelling and other expenses besides for the necessary 'golden keys' after your arrival at Teheran."

"I see. Well—I accept. When do we start?"

"A week to-morrow," said the "Captain." "You will meet us at Southampton. We shall be at the 'Neptune' hotel, in the names of Doctor Marwick and Professor Hall, scientists proceeding to India. You will join us as our secretary, and play that *rôle* till we part at Calcutta. We shall expect you at noon of that day."

"Good! I will be there," said Lester Wylde, rising. "Good morning, my dear partners!"

"Wait!" said the "Captain," as he touched the electric-bell knob.

"Waiter, a bottle of 'extra dry'!"

In another minute it was brought, opened, and debottled.

"Gentlemen," said the "Captain," raising his glass, "Success to the *Great Shah Syndicate!*"

Each man drained his glass; five minutes later the three, descended the steps of the private hotel in Bishopsgate Street Within, that had been the scene of the meeting; the lean man and his stout comrade turning to go towards Liverpool Street, while Lester Wylde, hailing a hansom, drove rapidly away in the opposite direction.

"Paulton Square, Chelsea, Number seventeen," he had called to the driver through the trap; and as he bowled along westwards, he more than once exultantly exclaimed amid the roar of the traffic:

"Now, Edie, my girl! here's your chance; and it won't be your fault, I know, if you don't make the most of it!"

CHAPTER II.

Its Doings.

At the railway terminus in Calcutta, three men stood on the departure platform at the open door of a first-class carriage attached to the Northern Mail.

Two of them were talking earnestly to the third member of the group, who, beyond an occasional interjection, appeared to be utterly indifferent to everything and everybody.

"Now, look here, Wylde," said the leanest of the three, "we don't want to waste more time over this business than can be helped, so we shall look to see you on the date agreed upon at Jung Rao, the money-changer's house in Cabool, on the stroke of noon."

Lester Wylde removed the cigar from his lips.

"At noon of that day," he said, quietly rolling the "weed" with his thumb and forefinger, "you will see me—if alive; if anything should happen to me—well—you shall still hear of me."

"Captain" Montague shivered perceptibly at this latter suggestion.

"You won't fail! You *can't* fail!" he hurriedly remarked. "You've as much at stake as we have, barring preliminaries, so if it's only for your own sake you'll do your best for your own skin, and to bring off the deal."

"There!" said Fitchett querulously, "of course he will! Don't be a fool, Monty!"

No one of them save Wylde, had observed a young English girl of attractive personality—dark, piquant, *petite*, sitting, surrounded with feminine impedimenta, in a far corner of the carriage, and in the shadow of the darkened "jalousies."

Could the lean man and the stout but have witnessed the greeting of Wylde by the lady, as the train steamed out of the station, it would certainly have been an eye-opener for the precious pair.

"My dear," said Lester, "you have managed beautifully all through. Our two very clever friends have no more idea that the charming young lady, their fellow-passenger, and table acquaintance on board the *Syria*, was the little wife of Philip Lester, alias Lester Wylde, than that—well—that I am *not* that which I profess to be."

"Now, tell me," said the girl (she was barely twenty), "as we are alone, what you wish of me."

"It's very simple, Edie. On our arrival at Teheran—if we ever get there—I shall carry out so much of our friends' programme as relates to my character of confidential agent of the Syndicate, and as will be sufficient to gain me an entry into his Imperial Majesty's domestic preserves. You, then, at the proper moment will appear on the scene as an English lady doctor, who is desirous of establishing herself in the Shah's capital. This will, I think, as it did in the case of the late Ameer of Afghanistan, be more than agreeable to him—for English 'medicine' and its professors, are valued the world over."

"Yes—and then?"

"Then—it will be for you to create a feeling in the monarch's mind that he is suffering from some chronic malady or other; dose him well, and so on; but, above all, keep about him, and—well—worm out of him all you can relative to his treasures."

"I see. It's risky, Phil; but what about the other two—and—and you?"

"That's a secret, my dear—for the present. For myself, I shall always be within call of you, and at the precise moment when you signify that you have got the "Open Sesame" I shall be ready to avail myself of the opportunity, and to bring you off with what we have come for!"

* * * * *

For once, things worked themselves out just as Wylde had planned.

Arrived at Teheran, he sought the good offices (backing

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his efforts with a vigorous twist of the "golden key") of one of the Shah's most influential ministers, the Deputy Grand Vizier.

There was evidently some connection between this individual and Jung Tao of Cabool, for the latter's name mentioned, as per Fitchett's instructions, the Persian official was not only amenable, but deferential.

The next day but one after his interview with the Deputy, Wylde was admitted to an audience with the successor of Darius.

What actually took place on the occasion has never transpired.

The one important result was, however, the Royal command for the attendance, at an early date, of Doctor Edith Wells, at the Palace.

Things moved rapidly after this, in somewhat inverse ratio to the usual course of Eastern procedure, which is generally slow, and never sure.

Just three weeks after the instalment at Court of "Doctor" Wells as Lady Physician Extraordinary, Wylde, who, through his new friend the Deputy Vizier, had been in daily communication with his wife, received an intimation, through the same source that the "Open Sesame" was in her possession, and that if he would be at midnight on the outside of the garden gate leading into the private pavilion assigned to her for a residence, he would be conducted to her by a black deaf mute.

She would then give him such information as would enable him to remove without hindrance the bulk of the Imperial treasure.

Wylde, disguised in a "kaftan" and long native robe, his skin darkened to the necessary shade, at midnight stood in the shadow of the gate embrasure.

When the door cautiously opened a black hand and arm dragged him inside, and within three minutes he was in Edie's presence.

Then she told him how that a long underground tunnel led from the Shah's private apartment to the treasure-room immediately under the pavilion where they then were.

She had accidentally discovered this while attending upon his Majesty.

She had also, as accidentally, found out that an outlet to this tunnel existed, by means of a cunningly devised trap-door, in one of the rooms of the pavilion itself.

What followed is now matter of Persian history, although the main facts did not come out till many months after the event.

* * * * *

The caravan route through Bagdad and Damascus to Aleppo, is a roundabout way from Persia to Europe, and, more than that, a way full of ruts and pitfalls.

It is not often that Europeans travel by it, so that the spectacle of an Englishman and his wife, with five camel-loads of baggage, doing the journey as part and parcel of the ordinary caravan, was not only unusual but curious.

Between Aleppo and Marseilles there is an intermittent steamboat service, principally for mails.

By one of the boats of this line the Englishman and his wife travelled from Apello to the French port.

It is known that—staying in the city for a couple of days—the pair sailed, by a Messagerie Maritimes steamer, for New York.

There all traces of them were lost.

Six months later, one Cyrus Hoffman, and his beautiful young wife, established themselves in the City of the Golden Horn as social leaders of wealth beyond calculation.

Cyrus Hoffman is credited with having made his money in "Oil"; certainly he holds "Standard" oil shares to an amount equal almost to that possessed by another well-known American millionaire.

Mrs. Hoffman is celebrated for her diamonds, which exceed in beauty, brilliancy, number and value, anything ever before or nowadays seen throughout the American continent

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CHAPTER III.

Its End.

MORTIMER FITCHETT and "Captain" Montague are sitting, one on either side the table, in the self-same private room at the hotel in Bishopsgate Street Within, where we first saw them.

They had been silent for some time.

On the table lay a letter, and it was easy to see, by the disgusted glances each man every now and then cast at it, that it was the prime cause of their depressed and miserable state of spirits.

"Monty," said Fitchett at last, "it's no use crying over it now it's done. We must make the best of it."

"Make the best of it!" retorted the other savagely. "It was you who introduced this Wylde into the scheme; it's you, therefore, that's responsible for its upset!"

"I know! I know! But how could I tell that Garraway was mistaken in his man? Well, he wasn't mistaken, in a way, for he went one better than us—that's all."

"All! Just think of us two fools, waiting, lamblike, in Cabool for a man and millions that were travelling as fast as money could take them in the very opposite direction. It's enough to make one commit suicide!"

"Well, you can do as you like. I'm just as mad as you are; and I've lost just as much as you, too; but, who knows, some day we may come across Mr. Lester Wylde, and—well, then it won't be good for him, I think—at least, speaking for myself, it won't!"

Here Fitchett took up the letter, and read it again.

The post-mark on the letter had been "Southampton," but in addition there were certain other marks notifying that the letter had been collected by the mail at sea.

It ran:—

"MY DEAR PARTNER —

"I have not very much to say, beyond thanking you very much for your kind furnishing of the means which have enabled me to successfully carry out the little Persian scheme, which I, myself, had had in mind for at least a year before you yourselves woke to the possibilities of it.

"I do not propose to return you your generous contribution to the sinews of war, as I am of opinion that a little 'backwater' of this sort will be a lesson to you, and a warning to you to be more careful in the future when taking in a 'third partner.'

"My wife, the lady next to whom 'Captain' you sat at table on board the *Syria*, joins with me in wishing you both all the future business success you undoubtedly deserve, only advising you, for your own sakes, and if you desire to retain your heads upon your shoulders, to strike out Persia from any list you may be forming of possible fields of operation.

"We shall often think of you, and at festival times drink many a bumper to the 'long life' and 'prosperity' of 'The Great ——— Syndicate'!!

RALPH ENDERBY.

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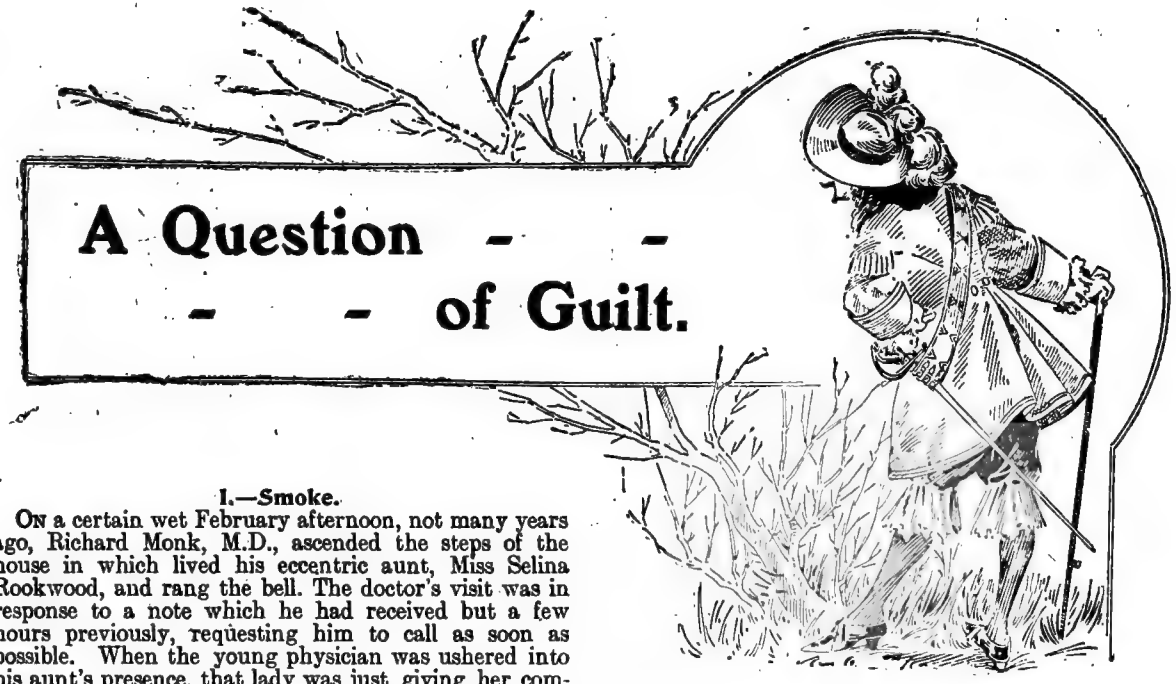

A Question - - - - of Guilt.

I.—Smoke.

On a certain wet February afternoon, not many years ago, Richard Monk, M.D., ascended the steps of the house in which lived his eccentric aunt, Miss Selina Rookwood, and rang the bell. The doctor's visit was in response to a note which he had received but a few hours previously, requesting him to call as soon as possible. When the young physician was ushered into his aunt's presence, that lady was just giving her companion certain shopping directions. He could not avoid overhearing the conclusion of her remarks, to the effect that "from the milliner's you go to the chemist's and ask him to make me up my medicine; while he is doing that go to the post-office and post the letters and buy me some stamps; from there go back to the chemist's, where the medicine will probably be ready; then stop at the railway station and see if those two parcels have arrived for me, and then come back at once—now, do you think that you can remember all that?" Upon receiving an affirmative reply, Kate Clare was told to go, and the old lady turned her attention to her nephew.

It has already been stated that Miss Selina Rookwood was eccentric; it should now be added that she was also very wealthy, and that her only near relation was her nephew. She was a tall, thin woman, with a nose resembling a beak and a voice that was remarkable for its shrillness. As she had never been able to secure a husband, she devoted her entire attention to entomological research, and the walls of her rooms were lined with glass cases in which reposed all classes of *coleoptera* and *hymenoptera*, with pins and needles stuck through their bodies. So extensive was her collection that she had been elected an honorary member of various entomological societies, and although scientists frequently paid her visits to examine her rare specimens of African and South American beetles and butterflies, she was without honour among the unappreciative townspeople, who irreverently styled her "the insect collector."

Miss Selina, moreover, had a very disagreeable way of letting her nephew know that her fortune, or at least the greater part of it, might be left to some museum or scientific body if he did not accede to her whims in every respect.

"So you have come at last," she snapped out; "you needn't take off your coat, for what I have to say will take but a very few moments, and it is probably the very last time that I shall ever care to see you or speak to you." Then, noticing a surprised look on her nephew's face, she continued: "Is all this true that I have heard, that you are engaged to be married to Prof. Strang's daughter? Didn't you think it worth your while to consult me first?"

"But, my dear aunt," he began.

"Don't 'dear aunt' me," she replied, and she worked herself into a passion that turned her face scarlet; "do you think that I would allow you to marry the daughter of that man? That man who ridicules my collections, and——"

"Really, Aunt Selina, won't you allow me to explain——"

"I want no explanation from you. Answer me, are you engaged to her or not?"

"My dear aunt, you should not excite yourself so, I——"

"Will you answer my question? Yes or no?"

"Yes, I am engaged to——"

"Then go!" she fairly screamed, and pointed with her long finger to the door. "Go, I say, and to-morrow I shall send for my lawyer, and have my will altered. What? Are you still here? Go! Go! I say!"

And Mr. Richard Monk, seeing what a passion she was in, and thinking that his presence would only excite her more, rapidly walked out of the house into the street.

II.—Sparks.

The afternoon had not advanced very far, and the doctor meditated as to where he should go next; he walked slowly down the street towards that portion of the town which was occupied chiefly by the shopkeepers. He

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was pale and nervous, irritated and undecided. His hands were in the pockets of his overcoat, and were both tightly clenched. Mechanically, he repeated his aunt's last words: "She said, 'to-morrow I shall send for my lawyer and have my will altered,' then there must be a will now, and I am evidently handsomely remembered. The new will which she intends to execute to-morrow will probably leave all or at least the greater part of her fortune to those butterfly-chasers and insect collectors. But if she shouldn't make a will then I——"

Glancing ahead he saw Kate Clare, his aunt's maid, entering the chemist's door. He waited patiently till she came out, and then approached the door and looked in.

Kate by this time had disappeared round the corner. Nobody was inside but the old chemist; he was a personal friend of the young doctor, and compounded nearly all of the latter's prescriptions. Doctor Monk went in, and sauntered to the back of the shop; he said good-afternoon to the proprietor.

The elder man noticed the pale appearance of the younger one, and remarked:

"Well, well, whatever is the matter? You look terribly shaken up. Better fix up something for yourself."

Monk replied to the effect that nothing was the matter with himself, and as the chemist was just beginning to compound the tonic for Miss Rookwood, he stood by his side and watched him. The prescription was written by a physician from a neighbouring town; it was dated some time previously, and was pasted in a large old-fashioned scrap-book. Monk could not avoid reading some of the ingredients—"Acid Tannic gr. i., Syr. Yerba Santo oz., iii, sulph. quin. gr. xliv."

The chemist had begun, and every few seconds he held his graduated glass above his head to see that the proportions were properly observed. Both men were hidden from view by a row of shelves on which reposed bottles, pots, and small jars. The younger man was now reading the titles, and could his thoughts have been photographed or printed, they would look something like this:

"Pretty good collection for such a small place—Yes, that solution is better than the other—ah, he didn't have that the other day—I must recommend him to get—hello; sulph. morph. and sulph. quin. side by side on the shelf—wouldn't do that—look exactly alike, too—if I—no, no, it's too horrible to think about——"

Why did the front door open at that moment and a customer enter? Why did the chemist hasten to the front of the shop to attend to him, leaving the prescription half-finished in the graded phial?

Dr. Monk's hands trembled violently as he helped himself to a glass of port wine, and when he left the shop a few minutes later, the chemist muttered:

"Well, he looked pretty badly shaken up when he came in, but now he looks like Robinson Crusoe did when he saw the footprints of the savages."

But then the old chemist did not know that his unfinished prescription had four grains of morphine added to it since he saw it last.

III.—Flame.

At eight o'clock the next morning Dr. Monk received a message from Kate Clare informing him of the death of his aunt. He hastily dressed himself, and proceeded at once to her residence, where he found that a messenger had been dispatched for the coroner. Going to his aunt's room, he saw the old lady in her bed, white and rigid, and his professional knowledge told him that she had evidently been dead some hours.

On the table by her bedside stood a clock, a glass of water, some spoons, and several bottles of medicine. One of these he recognised by the label and date as coming from the local chemist. It was uncorked, and about a tablespoonful of the contents was missing. The Doctor carefully recorked it, and then slipped it into his inner overcoat pocket.

An inquest was held at ten o'clock the following morning.

The doctor was the first witness called. He described in detail the interview he had with his aunt on the preceding afternoon but one. To various queries he replied that he had repeatedly warned the deceased of the danger of rupturing a blood-vessel during one of her periods of uncontrollable temper; deceased could get into a rage about trifles; witness was not her family physician, and had never been consulted by her in a professional capacity; took no interest in entomological research himself, but had been the means on three or four occasions of enabling his aunt to add to her collections; did not know exactly how much money she had, but supposed it was considerable; had not seen her will, and could not state what disposition she intended to make of her property.

A juryman then asked:

"Now, doctor, when you left there on the afternoon preceding your aunt's death, did you seriously think that she would carry her threat of disinheriting you you into execution?"

"I seriously thought that if I stayed away for a week or ten days, and she heard nothing of my movements, she would probably relent to some extent; at least, I think she would have sent for me and made some concessions."

The coroner then asked:

"When was your marriage to Miss Fanny Strang to take place?"

"The exact date has not yet been fixed. This affair will, of course, postpone it for at least a year."

This ended the doctor's testimony, and several neighbours were next called upon to give their versions as to the habits and characteristics of the deceased. They all concurred that deceased had ungovernable outbursts of passion; in other respects she was an educated, well-bred woman.

The last witness summoned was Miss Kate Clare, and, in reply to queries, she stated that she was housekeeper, companion, and general maid-of-all-work to the deceased; did not know what passed between aunt and nephew that afternoon, as she had been sent into the town to do some shopping; scarcely a day passed that deceased had not scolded her for negligence or inattention, and sometimes for the merest trifles; deceased had not told her what passed when the doctor called; had called on her mistress shortly before she went to bed, and was ordered to leave the room at once, as it would be necessary for her to be up very early; deceased paid her wages promptly, and had frequently remarked that she would leave witness something; witness had weak lungs; physicians had informed her that consumption might develop.

The testimony closed here and the jury retired to the room where the dead woman lay. Neither the doctor nor Miss Clare had made any reference to the medicine which Miss Rookwood was accustomed to take. The

last witness, in describing her movements that afternoon, did not think it necessary to inform the jurymen that she had called upon the chemist. Doctor Monk seemed surprised, when he heard her statement, but thought it best to say nothing. "Does she suspect me, and is she trying to shield me?" he asked himself.

The jury returned in about fifteen minutes, and brought in a verdict that "deceased had come to her death through heart disease, caused by undue excitement."

After Miss Selina Rookwood was buried, her will was produced by her lawyer, and when this document was read, it was discovered that with the exception of her entomological collections (which were bequeathed to some scientific institution), and a handsome legacy to Miss Clare, her entire possessions passed into the hands of her nephew. The latter sold the house, and by the advice of a fellow-physician, he went into Switzerland to repair his constitution.

IV.—Embers.

About four months after the events just narrated, Herr Andreas Fussli, the proprietor of Der Rothe Ochse, one of the smaller hotels situated on the single narrow street which the village of Zermatt possesses, was busily engaged in copying extracts from an "Improved Letter-Writer for Polite Correspondence." He found it a difficult matter to convey the information he desired to impart, as he was compelled to take portions of several letters in the book before him and fit them together. When, therefore, his writing was finished, it read as follows:

"Zermatt, June 26th, 19—.

"*To the Hochwohlgeborone Fraulein Fanny Strang:*

"Be prepared, my dear Fraulein, to receive information of a most unpleasant nature. Remember, as the Scriptures have it, that man is born to die and to be born again. It is with feelings consisting of an admixture of sorrow and commiseration that I must impart to you the news of the untimely demise of a certain Doctor Richard Monk, whose earthly remains now lie in my back parlour awaiting interment in the English cemetery. The doctor was brought here late last night, suffering from internal injuries, which he had received when he slipped from the steps cut in the snow-slope at the shoulder of the Matterhorn. A physician was immediately summoned, but the sufferer died shortly afterwards. He murmured your name several times, as well as the words 'ant' and 'morphine.' (*Nota Bene.*—It is too cold for ants in this place, and the physician would not give him any morphine.) Letters from you and a considerable sum of money were found in his clothes. I await your further instructions in this painful affair, and sign myself, your obedient servant.

"Andreas Fussli."

"*Post Scriptum.*—Pardon, if you please, any grammatical inaccuracies which in my epistle following may occur. My letter-writer did not possess any example to fit, and I alone, with my French-English Dictionnaire, did make him fit.

"P.S. Number 2.—I wish to say there is due to me the sum of francs 460. Shall I take this from Mr. Monk's trousers?

"P.S. Number 3.—Some of my cards I inclose if you should visit Zermatt. My prices are very reasonable, and I have a *chef* who was waiter in a London hotel once formerly."

V.—Ashes.

The summer had gone and the death of Doctor Monk was no longer the subject which engaged the minds of the townspeople. The clergyman had briefly alluded to the affair in one of his sermons; Miss Strang was still mourning for her lover, and the property and money of Miss Selina Rookwood's nephew passed into the hands of some distant relative. The matter was pretty well forgotten, when it was as suddenly revived—this time once more through the medium of a letter which the chemist received. It was not only a letter but a confession of guilt from the conscience-stricken Miss Clare. This document was dated from Melbourne, and, after stating that the writer had seen the death of Doctor Monk, and that she herself was a victim of consumption, it concluded as follows:—

"Now that I know that I have not much longer to live, it is only fair that I make known to you a dreadful secret which weighs upon my mind. Miss Rookwood was always good to me and even remembered me in her will; otherwise I would be absolutely penniless to-day. I did not deserve such kindness, for I was the means of causing her death. She often scolded me for my negligence and disorderly methods, and on that fatal night she was the victim of my carelessness.

"On seeing her in bed that evening she was very excited and talked bitterly about her nephew; I attempted to quiet her, but she would listen to nothing from me, and finally ordered me to leave the room and go to bed as she would want me early in the morning. I did so, but omitted to give her the medicine which the doctor had strictly enjoined me to do, and which I had brought home with me in the afternoon. You know the rest; the next morning she was dead, and if she had taken her customary tonic, perhaps she would be alive to-day.

"The coroner's jury stated that she had expired from some apoplectic stroke caused by her outbursts of rage and her excited condition. But I know better. I was the first one to enter that room of death in the morning, and I saw the bottle of medicine there untouched and unopened. Thinking that I might be questioned at the inquest, I took out the cork, filled the tablespoon, and scattered the medicine on the floor. I left the nearly filled bottle and the spoon on the table. Afterwards both were missing, but I do not know who took them."

The writer then reiterated her sorrow, and the letter concluded with a wish that she hoped to be forgiven.

The chemist exonerated her from all blame, and when he showed the letter to the clergyman, he remarked:

"Poor girl, she should not have taken the matter so seriously. The fact that Miss Rookwood did not receive her usual tonic that night could scarcely have caused her death. By the way, do you know that that medicine was the cause of my losing my best graduated glass? Miss Clare came to me that afternoon, and I began to mix the ingredients for the prescription; I was called away for a few minutes, and when I resumed my work my graduated glass was standing close to the edge of the counter.

"Doctor Monk was there at the time, and he may have moved it. I reached above my head, somewhat in front of me, and took down the sulphate of quinine. As I did so my elbow struck the glass and knocked it on the floor. My finest glass was broken, the contents spilt all over, and I was compelled to make that prescription again—a thing that rarely happens to me."

A. R. F.

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HOW I USED MY INDIAN CLUBS.

THOUGH of a timid nature, I am proud of my muscular development, which I seek to increase by the regular use of Indian clubs.

On one memorable night, and one only, have I found it necessary to use one of those formidable weapons which habit has rendered familiar to my hand.

The grey of morning had just begun to steal into our bedchamber when Mrs. B. ejaculated with unusual vigour:

"Henry, Henry, they are in the drawing-room, and they have just knocked down the screen."

"My love," I was about to observe, "your imaginative powers have now arrived at the pitch of clairvoyance," when a noise from the room beneath us, as if all the fire-irons had gone off together with a bang, compelled me to acknowledge to myself that there was something in Mrs. B.'s alarms at last.

I trod downstairs as noiselessly as I could, and in almost utter darkness. The drawing-room door was ajar, and through the crevice I could distinguish, despite the gloom, as many as three muffled figures. They were all of them in black clothing, and each wore over his face a mask of crepe, fitting quite closely to his features.

I had never been confronted by anything so dreadful before. Mrs. B. had cried "Wolf!" so often, that I had almost ceased to believe in wolves of this description at all.

Unused to personal combat, and embarrassed by the novel circumstances under which I found myself, I was standing undecided on the landing, when I heard the well-known whispers of "Henry, Henry," from the upper storey. The burglars caught it also. They desisted from their occupation of examining the articles of value upon the chimney-piece, while their fiendish countenances relaxed into a hideous grin.

One of them stole cautiously towards the door where I was standing. I heard his burglarious feet, I heard the "Henry, Henry!" still going on from above stairs; I heard my own heart go pit-a-pat, pit-a-pat within me. It was one of those moments in which one lives a life.

The head of the creped marauder was projected cautiously round the door as if to listen. I poised my weapon, and brought it down with unerring aim upon his skull. He fell like a bullock beneath the axe, and I sped up to my bedchamber with all the noiselessness and celerity of a bird. It was I who locked the door this time, and pulled the washhand-stand, two boxes, and a chair against it with the speed of lightning.

Was Mrs. B. out of her mind with terror that, at such an hour as that, she should indulge in a paroxysm of mirth?

"Good gracious," I cried, "be calm my love; there are burglars in the house at last."

"My dear Henry," she answered, laughing so that the tears quite stood in her eyes, "I am very sorry; I tried to call you back. But, when I sent you downstairs, I quite forgot that this was the morning upon which I had ordered the sweeps!"

One of those gentlemen was at that moment lying underneath with his skull fractured, and it cost me £15 to get it mended.

T. L. F.

Millionaire Carnegie's Opinion of Happiness.

Mr. Andrew Carnegie was interviewed the other day by a representative of the *Church Family Newspaper*. The conversation turned on the secret of happiness.

"Then the secret of happiness," queried the reporter, "is, in your opinion——"

"A good conscience and a good digestion," came the ready reply. Charles Forde's Bile Beans for Biliousness will ensure the latter, and by so doing have restored happiness in hundreds of cases, where disorder of the digestive system and liver, weakness, and Summer-end fag have rendered it impossible. All sufferers from digestive troubles and that used-up sensation known as Summer-end fag will find a forcible illustration of the curative power of Bile Beans in the following case: Miss May Musson lives at 26 Breach Road, Marlpool, Derbyshire. To-day she is enjoying splendid health, but she says—to use her own words to a *Derbyshire Advertiser* reporter:—"A short time back I was in a most deplorable condition. I was a sufferer from indigestion, anæmia, and debility. I did not have these ailments in small measure either! No matter what I ate, the pains after it were terrible. Indeed, I became so bad that I could not take a morsel of solid food.

"To such an extent did my strength fail, that if I walked a short distance I was thoroughly exhausted. Every little effort fagged me terribly, and caused me great distress. I had a severe pain in my left side which hurt me whenever I moved; and, what with one thing and another, I was far more like an old woman nearing the end of her days than a woman of 22 years. I was told that I had enlarged liver. Whatever it was which occasioned the pain I suffered, it seemed as if nothing I took would remove it. One day I saw Chas. Forde's Bile Beans for Biliousness advertised in the newspapers, and made up my mind to give them a trial. When I had finished the first box I felt better and got more. Each box of Beans made me better and better until the neighbours began to notice how vastly I was improving. First one and then another would say, "You do look different now." Whatever I looked, I know I felt different; and in the end I was completely cured. Never in all my life have I felt so well as I do at the present moment. I am sure I owe my life to Charles Forde's Bile Beans and I do all I can to let others know of them." It is by effecting such cures as the above that Chas. Forde's Bile Beans for Biliousness have made their world-wide reputation. They are without doubt superior to all known medicines for indigestion, anæmia, debility, summer-end fag, dizziness, liver and kidney disorders, constipation, piles, palpitation, headache, nervousness, all female ailments, blood impurities, rheumatism and sleeplessness. All chemists stock them or you may obtain direct from the Bile Bean Manufacturing Co., 119 London Wall, London, E.C., by sending price one and three half-pence or two and ninepence.

ESTABLISHED 1851.

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Southampton Buildings, Chancery Lane, London.

2½% DEPOSIT ACCOUNTS repayable on demand 2½%

The BIRKBECK ALMANACK, with full particulars, post free.

FRANCIS RAVENSCROFT, *Manager*.

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Short Stories That . . . . . Make You Laugh.

We devote every week space in *Short Stories* to pithy, humorous anecdotes similar to those which appear in these columns. To those readers who submit storyettes which are used, a six shilling novel will be awarded. The anecdotes may be either original or selected; in the latter case, the source MUST be stated. Attempts must reach the Storyette Editor, *Short Stories* Office, Henrietta Street, Strand, London, W.C., by Monday, January 27th. Postcards only, please.

Mother Knew.

TEACHER: "Willie, does your mother know that the buttons are off your coat?" Willie: "Yes'm, and she knows where they are, too." Teacher: "Where are they?" Willie: "They are on father's trousers."

Too Literal.

SCENE: A Coffee Room. Customer (who has been long waiting): "I say, waiter, how long will my chop be?" Waiter: "About four inches and a 'arf, sir!" (Customer is comforted.)

Outrageous.

"WHAT'S the matter, Brush? You look sad." "I am sad. I decorated a set of soup plates for Mrs. Hoodelle, and what do you suppose she did with them?" "Give it up. What?" "Used them for soup!"

A Musical Cupboard.

A LITTLE boy, on coming home from church where he had seen a person work the bellows of the organ, said to his mother, "Oh, mamma, I wish you had been at church to-day. Such fun! A man pumped music out of an old cupboard!"

Papa was a Coal Merchant.

"DOES it not throw a shade of bitterness into your heart," she said, "to see the trees all leafless, and to hear the wind sighing for ever in mournful monotony? Does it not make you feel that there is too much that is bleak in the world?" "No," he answered, "it weally does not." "Why?" "Because my papa is in the coal business."

A Good Advertisement.

"WHY do they not put up some protection, a rail, anything, in a dangerous spot like this?" inquired the personally conducted tourist on a mountain side in Switzerland. "Well," replied the guide; "there has been some talk about it; but the commune thought it would do harm to the neighbourhood. You see, an accident or two every season gets the place talked about."

Obeying the Priest.

AN Irishman made a sudden rush into a doctor's house, took from his pocket a soda-water bottle, filled to the brim with some pure liquid, and handing it across the counter, exclaimed: "There, doctor, sniff that, will you?" The doctor did as he was directed, and pronounced the liquid to be genuine whisky. "Thank you, doctor," said the Irishman. "Hand it to me again, if you please." The doctor again did as directed, and asked what he meant. "Och, thin," said Pat, "if you will have it, the priest told me not to drink any of this unless I got it from the doctor. So here's your health and the priest's health."

Could Tell the Difference Now.

VISITOR: "So your brother is taking lessons on the violin. Is he making progress?" Little Girl: "Yes, he's got so far now we can tell whether he is tuning or playing."

An "Up" One.

HE (who on her recommendation has sent her to choose her own birthday present): "Good gracious, six pounds for a bonnet! Why, you told me you could get one for ten shillings." She: "Yes, ten shillings and up. This is an 'up.'"

Natural Conclusion.

MR. SOFTLEIGH: "Tommy, do you really think your sister likes to see me better than she does Mr. Biggs?" Tommy: "I'm sure of it, for in the evenings when he's in the parlour she turns the light down so low she can't see him at all."

Paddy Had Him.

"OCH, now, an' pwhat are iggs to-day, Mister Doolan?" asked Paddy, entering the grocer's shop. "Eggs are eggs to-day," replied the shopman, looking triumphantly at two or three lady customers, who smiled sweetly. "Sure, an' I'm moighty glad to hear it. The last 'iggs I had from here were nearly chickens."

Too Industrious.

A SERVANT girl returned to the employment agency and said she had been discharged from her place because she was too industrious. "Why, how can that be? What did you do?" "Why, they told me to clean the house. I cleaned all upstairs, and then went down into the cellar and dusted and washed all the bottles in the wine cellar, and they discharged me!"

Sufficient Reason.

MAN (to acquaintance): "Hello, Grinsley, how are you getting on?" Grinsley: "So, so, only." Man: "Are you still running that woman's rights paper?" Grinsley: "No; I have given that up." Man: "Didn't pay, eh?" Grinsley: "Oh, yes; it paid very well." Man: "Why didn't you continue to run it?" Grinsley: "I got married."

Not His Heart.

THEY were sitting in the moonlight on the rocks. "Angelina," whispered Ernest, "you know I love you! Will you be mine?" "Alas, Ernest, I fear it cannot be!" "Ah," gasped Ernest, placing his hands on his breast, "broken at last!" "What?" screamed the girl, throwing her arms about his neck, and her breath coming in great panting sobs. "I did not mean it, Ernest! Oh, speak! Tell me what is broken! Is it your heart?" "No, my darling; only my collar-stud. I felt it slip."

They were Used to It.

THEY approached each other from opposite directions. One was pale as a ghost, the other red as fire. Presently they met, and, careless of the fact that dozens of eyes were upon them, they kissed each other. The meeting seemed to bring them perfect peace. But, alas and alack! they had been together scarcely twenty seconds when up came a man with a stick. He struck a sharp, quick blow, and the pale one was sent spinning several feet away. The other neither screamed nor fainted; there was no tear-shedding, no heart-breaking, no resentment, not even a murmur. Billiard-balls are used to that sort of thing.

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Allen Foster & Co.

THE LONDON MANUFACTURERS

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Design No. 732. 10/6.

DESIGN No. 732. 10/6.

New Chesterfield Coat for the Spring Season. Thirty inches long, made in stylish Tweed, Covert Coating, or Vicuna Cloths. Colours: Fawn, Brown, Grey, Greeny Fawn, and Black. All sizes in stock. Price only 10/6; carriage paid 6d. extra. Send for one.

Design No. 1062 10/6

DESIGN No. 1062. 10/6.

The Latest in Costume Skirts. Trimmed with the new cording in stylish zig-zag design. The band of satin at top of flounce is nicely stitched. This attractive Skirt is made in the **Venetian Cloth or Specialite Serge.** Colours: Black, Navy, Royal, Green, Oxford, Fawn, Brown, Purple, Light or Dark Grey. Patterns Post Free. The Skirt has a 15in. flounce, and is lined throughout with good linenette. Price only **10/6**; carriage paid, 5d. extra.

DESIGN No. 600. 12/6.—The New Chesterfield Coat and Skirt Costume. The Coat has the fashionable "Alfosco" Collar, trimmed tailor stitching, gauntlet cuffs, single-breasted. The Skirt is well and carefully made, and has the latest style flounce, which is lined linenette. Made in all beautiful shades of ALLEN FOSTER & CO.'S **Specialite Serge** or **Venetian Cloth.** Costume complete, **12/6**; car. 6d. ex. Skirt alone, **6/6**; car. 5d. **Satisfaction Guaranteed.**

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Mr. Geo. R. Sims'

"TATCHO"

THE GREAT HAIR RENEWER.

WHAT PEOPLE THEMSELVES ARE SAYING:

"A PEARL BEYOND PRICE."—35 Aberdeen Road, Cotham, Bristol, December 23rd, 1901. Mrs. E. C. Parsons regards "Tatcho" as a pearl beyond price. In her opinion everybody desiring to cultivate, improve, or retain a good head of hair should try it.

"3 SEPARATE HAIRDRESSERS."—Rostherne, St. Stephen's Road, Bournemouth, November 30th, 1901. Mrs. Lloyd wants to give three bottles of "Tatcho" to some friends here, as a lady in the house is strongly recommending it, and says that three separate hairdressers tell her what a wonderful growth of new hair she has.

"A WONDERFUL DISCOVERY."—Lyss Place, Liss, Hants, November 30th, 1901. I find "Tatcho" a most excellent and pleasing application for the hair; in fact, a wonderful discovery which ought to be very widely known.—H. PELHAM PAPILLON.

CUT THIS OUT AND **POST TO-DAY.** (If your Local Chemist is unable to supply the large Trial Bottle.) THIS **COUPON** ENTITLES THE SENDER TO A LARGE TRIAL BOTTLE direct from the Tatcho Depot for **4/6** **1/10**

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In making this unique offer the Company is acting with the knowledge that such distribution of large Trial Bottles is making the preparation even more widely known, and is introducing it to every home in a more satisfactory manner than could be effected by any other system of advertising.

"TATCHO" is a brilliant, spirituous tonic, the colour of whisky, free from all grease.
"TATCHO" is not a dye, and contains no colouring matter or any harmful ingredient.
"TATCHO" is sold by all Chemists and Stores throughout the world in bottles at 1s., 2s. 9d., and 5s.

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SORENESS
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BRUISES

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CURED. This can be done with or without patient's knowledge. Send me a stamp and I will tell you how. (Send no money.) Address, in confidence, Mrs. C. H. (Room 8), 195 Oxford Street, London, W.

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can safely Reduce Weight and cure Corpulency permanently by taking TRILENE TABLETS (Regd.) for a few weeks. They are small, agreeable, harmless, and never fail to IMPROVE both HEALTH and FIGURE without Change of Diet. An English Countess writes: "*Your Trilene Tablets act admirably.*"

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Princess Liechtenstein writes from Landsberg, Austria: "Pray send your excellent tablets directly." Mr. Canham, 87 Alexandra Road, Norwich: "Tablets cured my wife of extreme stoutness; it has never returned." Mrs. H. Cox, 28 Warnall Road, Hucknall Torkard, writes: "The Tablets reduced me 1½ stone." Mrs. S. Alexander, 102 Dixon Street, New Swindon, says: "They reduced me 2½lb. and I am cured." Mrs. Darnley-Smith, of Landscove Vicarage, Ashburton, says: "Tablets have reduced me very much." Mrs. Crossley, of Rose Hill, Torver, Coniston, says: "I weigh much less and can breathe so much easier; I am delighted."

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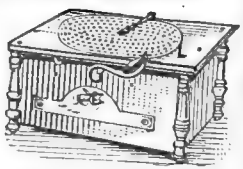

Made in 3 sizes, ebony and gold case. With 6 metal tunes. Full organ tone. Plays songs, hymns, dance music. Sent on receipt of 4s., P.O., if desired. Write for terms to pay 4s. monthly. Price list and tunes. ATLAS CO., 184a High St. Camden Town, London; 63 Seven Sisters Rd.; 14 High Rd., Kilburn.

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Every Man suffering from Varicocele and its consequent nervous exhaustion speedily relieved and cured by the most advanced and rational method of treatment yet introduced. An Illustrated Circular giving full particulars and testimonials showing successful cures, sent free in a sealed envelope.—S. S. NORTON, 59 and 60 CHANCERY LANE, LONDON, W.C. Established over 30 years. Consultation Free.

DON'T COUGH USE KEATING'S LOZENGES FOR YOUR COUGH.

ANY DOCTOR WILL TELL YOU, "there is no better Cough Medicine."—One gives relief: if you suffer from cough try them but once; they *will* cure, and they *will not* injure your health; an increasing sale of over 80 years is a certain test of their value. Sold in 1¾d. tins.

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In Confidence.

Conducted by Madge Morris.

[I shall be glad to answer, to the best of my ability, any letters from readers dealing with affairs of the heart, tangles in domestic life, or points of etiquette. All communications must be addressed to me personally, care of the Editor of *Short Stories*.—MADGE MORRIS.]

"S. P. T."—Yours is certainly a difficult position. A girl who is always running after a man, and giving him presents, is quite sure to prove her own enemy, and defeat her own ends. As you really feel that you have no love to offer her, I should tell her so frankly, unpleasant though the task will be. Make your parents understand that she is not the sort of girl you could ever care for, and they will most probably cease to encourage her.

"Polly."—If both you and your lover are wishing to be friends again, and both feel diffident about saying so, I should advise you to write and tell him that you have come to the conclusion that it was very silly to quarrel over such a trifle as his younger brother seeing you home, and that you are willing to forgive and forget it if he is.

"Which is the best time to marry?" asks Ena. ——Whenever things seem opportune, my dear Ena. Few girls are inclined to sit down and ask themselves this question in cold blood. I should imagine that you are not engaged, or if so, have entered into the thing in a very philosophical spirit. Generally speaking, early spring is the best. Then you have all the external joys of Nature to accompany your realisation of love's dream. With all the outdoor recreations to share with each other, such as cycling, walking, driving, boating, the possibilities of any disturbance of that dream are less than if accompanied by the fog, cold, and damp of winter. And we all know how important it is to get over the early stages of marriage without a "tiff." Then when winter does come, you will have accustomed yourself to each other, and will take to fireside pleasures and winter enjoyments and responsibilities as a natural sequence and pleasant variant. But a marriage in winter, when all is drear and dark, when fog chokes one, when microbes are getting active, and household expenses and bothers are greater than in summer, may be the prelude to ill temper and perhaps divergence which joyous spring drives away. So, if your man did really pop the question under the mistletoe a week or so back, and you have an active interest in this question, I advise you to wait till Easter, when the new year will be old and pleasant enough to beam on you.

"Ethel" wants to know if a country girl is not more precluded from the chanced of meeting eligible suitors than a town girl?——Do not be despondent. Your case appears very much worse than it is. Living in the country is not necessarily prejudicial to a girl's meeting eligible suitors. In fact, I think the reverse is the case. You will find that the proportion of old maids in the country is less than in towns. Sooner or later the right man turns up, so don't be worried. Perhaps you do not meet so many men as a London girl, but perhaps you are all the better for that. Meeting a lot of men does not necessarily lead to marriage. I myself know a family of three girls who have all their lives lived in the remotest country districts. Now all are well and happily married. Had they lived in town they might have had many flirtations and become experts at that pastime, but is it not better to meet few men and true than many and unreliable? In the case of my friends, visits from men were few and far between, yet, somehow or other, when they did appear, they turned out to be, from a girl's point of view, worth a dozen of the town butterflies a London girl encounters.

You say "Maud H.," that you are engaged to a man who has been abroad for over four years, and yet you have allowed another man to make love to you and kiss you and have promised to marry him. How girls can be so deceitful, is beyond me! If you love him really better than the man you are engaged to, your only honourable course is to write and tell him that you are tired of waiting for him, and have decided to return all his gifts and letters, asking him to forgive the pain you have caused him. Think well, however, before doing this, as a man who persistently makes love to a girl, knowing her to be engaged to another, is guilty of such underhand conduct as proves him to be the sort of man not greatly to be trusted. No wonder you feel dissatisfied at what you have done.

"J. E. C." passed a young lady who bowed to him, without noticing her. It afterwards occurred to him that she was none other than a girl he loved when a boy. How can he remedy his apparent slight?——I should advise you to send a line to the lady on general subjects, wishing her a happy New Year, and mention incidentally that it only occurred to you after she had passed the other day that the young lady who smiled so sweetly was none other than herself, your early love, and attribute it to your short-sightedness. If you word it very nicely, she may overlook your offence, and perhaps ask you to tea, in which case you will be able to resume the love-making operations you had to break off previously.

The Brain Gymnasium.

IN these competitions a prize of £1 1s. will be awarded each week to the competitor whose attempt we receive giving the correct solution of all the puzzles. If more than one is absolutely correct the prize of £1 1s. will be given to the first correct attempt dealt with.

If no lists of absolutely correct solutions are sent in, the first prize will be awarded to the competitor whose attempt is first dealt with showing the fewest mistakes.

Each week we shall award, in addition to the above, either ten of our gold-plated pencil-cases or ten popular novels, to be distributed amongst the competitors whose attempts are absolutely correct and have failed to win the first prize, or, if no complete lists of correct solutions are received, to those whose attempts show the fewest mistakes.

Write all your solutions on one side only of the paper, putting the number against each. Post the batch in an envelope marked "Brain Gymnasium, No. 25—30," to reach the Editor, *Short Stories*, 18 Henrietta Street, London, W.C., by first post on Monday, February 3rd, 1902.

Readers are invited to submit puzzles, acrostics, conundrums, word-squares, etc., for publication on this page. A gold-plated pencil-case will be given to each reader whose attempts are used. All attempts must be vouched for as original, and, of course, it is distinctly understood that the sender of a puzzle must neither compete in the competition nor divulge to anyone the solution. Any reader found infringing this rule will be severely dealt with.

No. 25. WORD SQUARE.

Form a double word square with the following letters. The connecting word means a joining:

AAAA B EEEE GG II LLL MM NNNNN
OOOO RR TT

No. 26. SELECTED WORDS.

From each of the following sentences select a word. Write the words thus selected in a column, when the first letter of each, if the words are correct, will spell the name of a well-known town in the United Kingdom:

1. A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush.
2. He that fights and runs away will live to fight another day.
3. A friend in need is a friend indeed.
4. Too many cooks spoil the broth.
5. A stitch in time saves nine.
6. To be or not to be.
7. Every cloud has a silver lining.

No. 27. ARITHMETICAL PUZZLE.

How can the number 45 be divided into four such parts that if you add 2 to the first part, subtract 2 from the second part, multiply the third part by 2, and divide the fourth part by 2, the total of the addition, the remainder of the subtraction, the product of the multiplication, and the quotient of the division are all equal.

No. 28. CHARADE.

My whole is under my second, and surrounds my first.

No. 29. ADDED LETTERS.

One-sixth of reason, plus two-ninths of splendour, plus one-third of famous, plus one-fifth of decapitate, plus two-fifths of fatal, plus one-third of tender. The whole will form a word meaning revive.

No. 30. SENTENCE-MAKING.

The following words when re-arranged will form a sentence:

Precedent of railways ten in wealthy have saloon as America some Britain the more own fitted-up enormous have at the different royal which carriages following their luxuriously built been expense in of the by upper railway.

Result of "Brain Gymnasium," Nos. 7 to 12.

The prize of £1 1s. has been awarded this week to Mr. J. S. Ryan, of 21 Abbotts Road, East Ham.

Gold-plated Pencil-cases have been sent to:
Miss M. Ryan, 21 Abbotts Road, East Ham.
Miss D. Ryan, 21 Abbotts Road, East Ham.
Mrs. E. Robinson, 60 Sherrard Road, Forest Gate, E.
Mrs. E. Ryan, 21 Abbotts Road, East Ham.
Miss V. Robinson, 60 Sherrard Road, Forest Gate.
J. J. Robinson, 60 Sherrard Road, Forest Gate.
D. G. Jelley, 3 Cautwell Road, Plumstead.
Miss Richardson, Wycar House, Bedale, Yorks.
E. Luck, 145 Hazelbury Road, Fulham.
E. Hutchings, 1 Hope Cottage, Milton Road, Mill Hill.

SOLUTIONS.

7. S airey Gamp.
C ricket on the Hearth.
R ome.
O liver Twist.
O liver Cromwell.
G ulliver's Travels.
E vangeline.
Lady of the Lake.

9. Pericarp.

10. Novelties.
Pedestrianism.
Contagion.
Misletoe.
Coagulate.
Depreciates.
Prerogative.
Sentimentalists.
Indefatigable.
Monarch.
Discretion.

11.
D U D E D O O R
U S E S O T H O
D E N S O H I O
E S S E V E R O O M
V A L E
E L L A
S T A R E A D A R E
T A L E A C I D
A L E S R I N D
R E S T E D D Y

12. Adelaide. Florence. Blue. Red. Jersey. Morocco. Ulster. Pearl. Green. Organ. Turkey. Sandwich. Tokay. Salmon. Leghorn. Iceland. Dresden. Ware. Moon. Snow. Farewell.

Printed by HORACE COX, Breams Buildings, London, E.C., and published by C. ARTHUR PEARSON LTD., Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

MAN'S INFLUENCE OVER MAN.

Remarkable Words on Personal Magnetism from an Eminent Divine.

No subject has excited so much interest or awakened so much discussion among thinking people of late as that of Personal Magnetism. It is worthy of note that clergymen, doctors, college presidents, and men of science everywhere are giving it deep thought. Many of them have openly certified to its wonderful powers. The outspoken words of the Rev. Paul Weller of Gorham, N.Y., in this connection will call forth no little additional comment.

REV. PAUL WELLER.

In answer to a personal letter from an intimate friend, asking if it were true that he (Rev. Mr. Weller) had become a firm believer in Personal Magnetism and Hypnotism Rev. Weller wrote:

"The facts are: The subject of Personal Magnetism or Hypnotism, to which I have devoted many years of study, was recently more forcibly than ever called to my attention through reading a scientific work on the subject, now being circulated by the New York Institute of Science of Rochester, N.Y.

"I am a minister of the Gospel, but I do not hesitate to say that the reading of that book and the subsequent study of its contents have worked an all-powerful, important and good influence over me. My recommendation of Personal Magnetism, a subject every man and woman may study with profit, is made after thorough investigation and with complete knowledge of its great value. I make this statement deliberately. The study of Personal Magnetism, as set forth in the admirable books I have mentioned above, should be next to the study of the Holy Bible.

"Personal Magnetism embodies all the laws governing man's influence over man. It is the power that makes men mould the minds of men. It turns life's failures into successes. It develops the latent powers of the will and makes one capable of the accomplishment of great deeds. I have received many letters on the subject, and to all writers I have answered: 'Write to the New York Institute of Science, Rochester, N.Y., asking for their scientific work on Personal Magnetism and Hypnotism. It will be sent to you free of charge. If its perusal does as much for you as it did for me you will thank me the longest day you live for having called your attention to the book.'—Yours truly, (Rev.) PAUL WELLER."

It will only be necessary for you to send your request to the New York Institute of Science, Dept. V A 9, Rochester, N.Y., U.S.A., and you will receive the volume Rev. Paul Weller recommends by return mail. IT IS FREE. A penny postal card will bring it.

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A victim, who was cured after five years' suffering, will gladly send full particulars of an inexpensive, guaranteed Cure on receipt of stamped addressed envelope.—FACIDERMA, 215 Piccadilly, London, W.

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GIVEN AWAY
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The Best and Daintiest of Ladies Weeklies. You should order a copy at once.
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"ALKAN"
CURES IN 1 MINUTE
By Inhalation.
The "FAMILY DOCTOR" writes:—"From investigation of the constituents, we have confidence in saying that the good results are not only rapid, but lasting and free from danger."
HEADACHE,
TOOTHACHE,
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NEURALGIA OF THE EAR.
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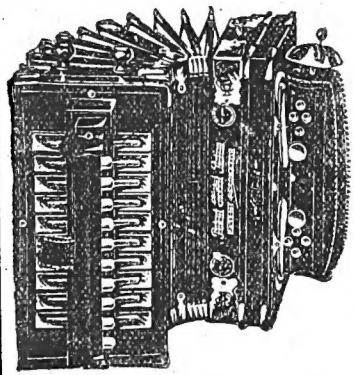

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